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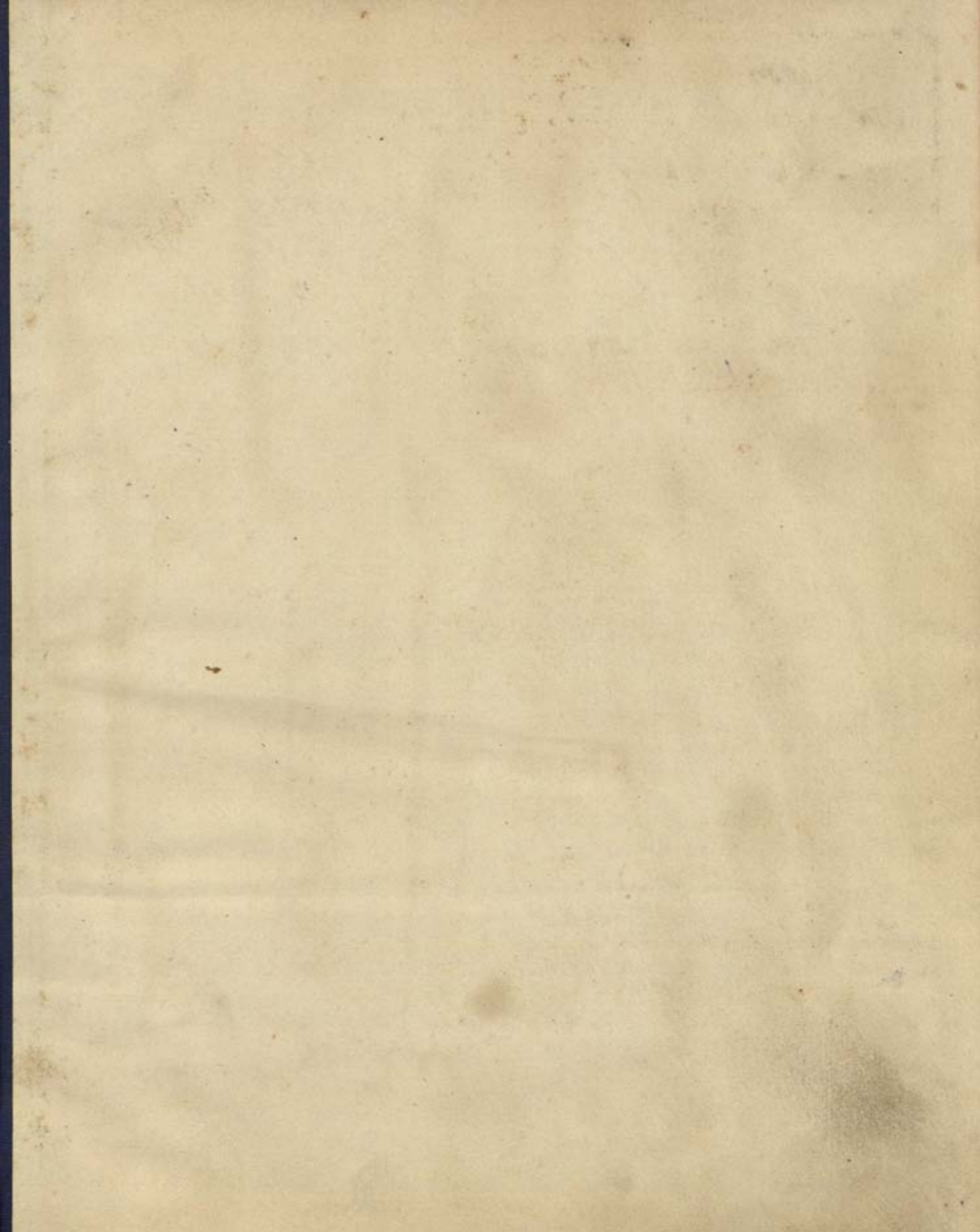
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ABANINDRANATH TAGORE  
STELLA KRAMRISCH  
EDITORS



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1890-1891

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1898-1899



## EARLY INDIAN PAINTED POTTERY

By. D. H. GORDON

"Painted Pottery"<sup>1</sup> are words that are in grave danger of becoming what Mr. A. P. Herbert calls "Witch Words", that is to say they are accumulating power of evocation of certain very definite ideas. On all hands one hears of Painted Pottery cultures, Painted Pottery levels, and closely and often erroneously connected with these words is another, "chalcolithic", which is used with increasingly loose abandon. In North-Western India there is a great deal of painted pottery the dating of which ranges from c. 4000 B. C. to 1945 A. D.; a little more circumspection is therefore needed in this matter of Painted Pottery, and, so far as India is concerned, it can be a most dangerous archaeological counter. It is not claimed that these notes do a very great deal towards solving the problems of painted Pottery in India, but what they do purport to do, is to assemble a large body of painted designs on pottery of all periods so that they may be conveniently compared, and their similarity and differences duly noted. With so many styles of pattern it has been difficult to follow very closely any logical coherent plan, but the following arrangement has been adhered to as closely as possible. The oldest designs from the Zhob have been taken first as being in all probability the earliest in date. These are grouped with other similar patterns from Harappa and from many sites of the Early

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1. I most gratefully acknowledge the permission given me by the Director General of Archaeology in India to make and publish line copies of pottery patterns originally illustrated in the following publications:

Explorations in Waziristan and North Baluchistan by Sir Aurel Stein.

Explorations in Sind by N. G. Majumdar.

Excavations at Harappa by Pandit Madho Sarup Vats.



Historic Period.<sup>1</sup> A number of Harappa designs are grouped for general comparisons and a few Jhukar Period designs are similarly grouped. There is an interesting polychrome group from the Zhob, some of which may possibly be allied to the polychrome of Jhukar, but at the present such an assumption is pure speculation and has no backing in fact. In passing it may be mentioned that North Western India also produces an immense variety of incised and impressed designs on pottery, of which I have a very large collection, but, though interesting these are not of the same far reaching importance, nor have they gathered to themselves the chronological implications of the Painted Pottery.

#### THE PAINTED POTTERY OF THE ZHOB

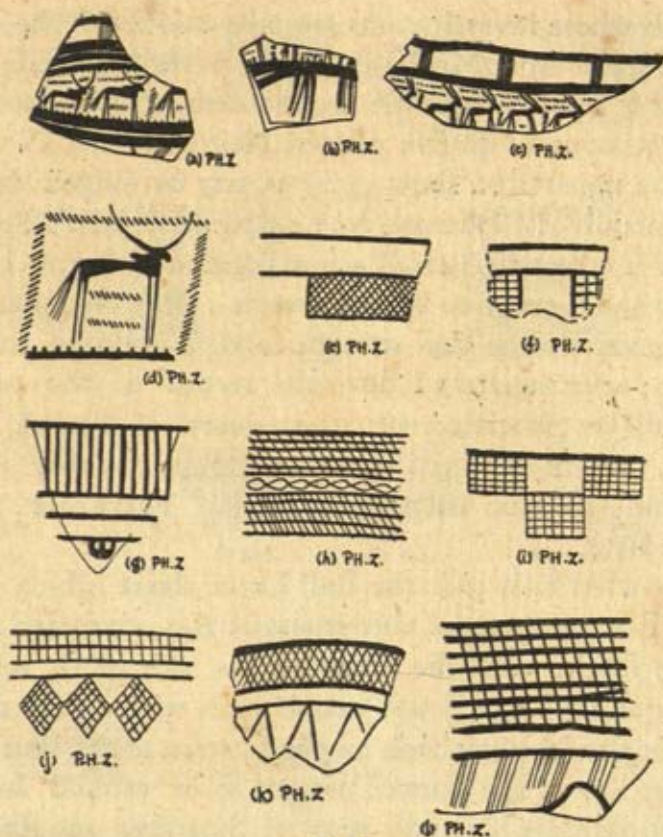
It will be best to make a general survey of the knowledge and ideas which have accumulated in recent years about this material, unfortunately they do not amount to the same thing. Inadequate first-hand knowledge of the material available has led to an over-simplification, and authorities have already divided the Zhob Cultures into various periods, which though disposing of some of this material quite satisfactorily, takes no account of a number of complications or of the quantity and diversity of patterns and fabrics which find no mention at all.

The painted pottery of the Zhob has been discussed by Sir Aurel Stein, Prof. Gordon Childe, and Mr. Stuart Piggott, but one of the best accounts which I have read is that compiled by Brigadier E. J. Ross which was very kindly sent to me for my information and comments some three years ago. I am not certain whether this account of his investigations into the sequence of the Rana Gundai mound has been published or not, but it should have been as it is of great value. I have never seen it quoted, but this may well happen as many articles of value are either disregarded or overlooked. I suffer from the considerable disadvantage of having my material from the Zhob at second hand from sites where there has been no scientific excavation of any real scope.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand I have

1. The expression The Early Historic Period as used here denotes that period from the commencement of the Mauryas to the end of the Guptas.

2. I am indebted to Lt. Colonel and Mrs F. T. Birdwood for all the trouble and care taken by them to gather for me as representative a collection of painted pottery fragments as possible from various mounds in the Zhob.





PL. I

been able to study the very large number of sherds in my possession at my leisure and make a detailed record of the pattern and fabric of each one of them.

At this point I wish to sound, not by any manner of means for the first time, a note of alarm. Rana Gundai, and I fancy most of the other Gundais, in the same manner as the Dheris of the Peshawar Vale, are gradually and surely but irrevocably disappearing as the result of their exploitation for manure earth. Every mound is not necessarily of the same value, but there are some which produce a complete sequence with lavish examples of every period. Such mounds are Rana Gundai, Periano Gundai and Dabar Kot in the Zhob and Sar Dheri and the Bala Hissar at Charsadda, when these mounds are gone, most of the evidence necessary to disentangle the problems of India's past in these regions will have gone with them.



Ross, with whose investigations must be associated the letter received by Mr. Stuart Piggott from Mr. Basil Grey,<sup>1</sup> as the exposure of a section at Rana Gundai is mentioned at the commencement of his account, divided the strata at that mound into five periods. Neither period IV nor period V, which last is the uppermost, show so far as may be judged from his notes any traces of unequivocal Harappa type sherds. In Ross's Period I which is a deep nearly uniform stratum of ashes, bones and burnt earth, pottery is scarce, coarse and appears to be hand made. Only one sherd of painted pottery was recovered from this stratum, and is painted in black on a darkish red slip; unfortunately I have no record of the pattern. Flake blades and points are associated with the pottery of Period I. Ten feet of this stratum were exposed and there are indications that it extends to at least another ten feet below this again. There are no structural remains in this layer.

Then comes what Ross calls the Bull Layer about which he writes at some length. Ross stresses the abruptness of the occurrence of this very striking pottery fabric, which he describes as pale pink terracotta, well levigated, without any slip, though a few pieces with a dark red slip have been found. He also lays emphasis on the fineness of the brushwork, which is far superior to any of the painted pottery in or around India, and it is not until one encounters the early vases of Susa that one finds workmanship that is equally fine. This layer was called by Ross the bull layer because of the large number of fragments found having part of a design of a frieze of bulls upon them. He rightly observes that the culture producing this pottery did not evolve on the spot, and that from a full-fledged state of excellence in Period II it deteriorated in Period III and disappeared in Period IV.

Period III according to Ross has derivatives of Period II at its lower levels. Fine pottery with a dark red slip, ornamented with geometrical patterns in black and red. He notices an exaggeration of the pot shoulder to the extent of forming a raised projecting rim. In my collection of Zhob fragments there are a number showing this rim. Ross notices that higher in his Period III layer the brushwork becomes poorer, individual

1. The Hissar sequence—the Indian evidence. By Stuart Piggott, *Antiquity*, Dec. 1943, p. 173. Reference to an exposure in the Rana Gundai mound, and footnote (3).





Pl. II.

strokes with the brush and hachuring die out, and the bowl is to a large extent superseded by a narrow vase. In connection with this period Ross mentions scale ornamentation, but without seeing an example it is impossible to say whether this is similar to the Indus scale pattern or not; I have not myself seen a fragment answering to this description. He however admits that this period is complicated and needs more study.

Period IV revealed a number of fragments of coarse large jars, highly decorated both in colour and relief, boldly painted in black and red with rough incised patterns. Ross states that but for the lack of any strata showing a period of prolonged unoccupation this pottery would appear to be of a very much later date. In Period V, that nearest the surface, painted pottery seems to have died out. Full of gaps as this reading of the Zhob pottery is, it is by far the most detailed account which we possess. Sir Aurel Stein deals very briefly with the pottery, merely making men-



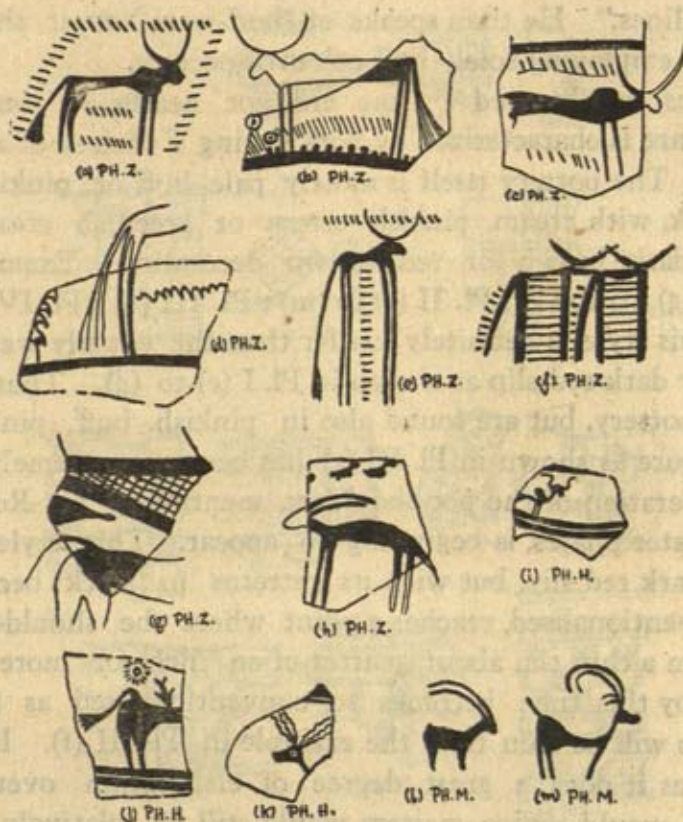
tion that painted pottery was found and that a certain amount of it was polychrome, particularly at Sur Jangal.<sup>1</sup> Prof. Gordon Childe, who saw some of this material while on a visit to India, confines himself almost wholly to the pottery of South Baluchistan, i. e. Nal, Kulli and Mehi, which are on the whole better represented and easier to define than the jumble of fabrics which exists in the Zhob. He mentions that—"at Moghul Gundai the accessory red is used as an embellishment for a perfectly typical Indus intersecting-circle pattern",<sup>1</sup> this fragment will be referred to later and is shown on Pl. VIII fig. (h). Mr. Stuart Piggott equates the zone of animals used as a decoration in the pottery of the Zhob with Hissar Ic, but does not include in his survey similar animal zones from Bampur and Nineveh V. He has also picked upon Sur Jangal as the type site for this pottery, when Rana Gundai could probably be chosen with far greater justification.

Let us now first of all look at the earliest Zhob pottery, some of which almost certainly antedates that of the Indus Valley, and see to what extent the pottery I have had under examination bears out the conclusions of those who have written about it previously. As I am about to use a number of terms, it will be as well to know what I mean by them, particularly the terms slip, wash and glaze which to my mind are used with singular abandon and lack of method by a large number of writers. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines slip as—"Semi fluid clay for coating or making a pattern on earthenware". When I refer to slip I mean a coating of uniform consistency, generally having a certain degree of smoothing or polish, which completely conceals and is possibly of a different colour to the main fabric of the pot. Wash is defined as—"Thin coating of watery colour" (applied to water-colour painting, not to pottery decoration). When I refer to wash I mean a thin watery coating lightly washed into the surface of the pot with a brush, so that the main fabric is barely concealed and the coating far from uniform. Glaze is defined as a vitreous substance or paint fixed on pottery by fusion. Very little pottery which answers to this description can be found on ancient sites ; and no piece of

1. 'An Archaeological Tour in Waziristan and North Baluchistan' by Sir Aurel Stein.

1. 'New Light on the Most Ancient East', p. 269 ff. by Prof. Gordon Childe.





PL. III.

it is represented among all the 270 odd painted pottery fragments dealt with here.

Having cleared the ground to a certain extent, let us now examine the fabrics and patterns of the earliest Zhob pottery shown in the plates. The first thing which strikes everyone is the amazing fineness and sureness of the drawing. The finest of the animal drawings as shown in Plate I (a) to (d) are painted, as Ross has described, on extremely fine pottery, but this pottery, and the slips and paint employed have a much greater range of types than has so far been recognised. Ross says—"The normal colour is pale pink terracotta without any slip, though a few pieces with a dark red slip have been found", and—"These bowls are painted in various designs in black," Stuart Piggott, who does not seem to have seen a great deal of this pottery, speaks of—"The North Baluchistan Zhob Culture characterized by red slipped wares with black painted decoration and sometimes



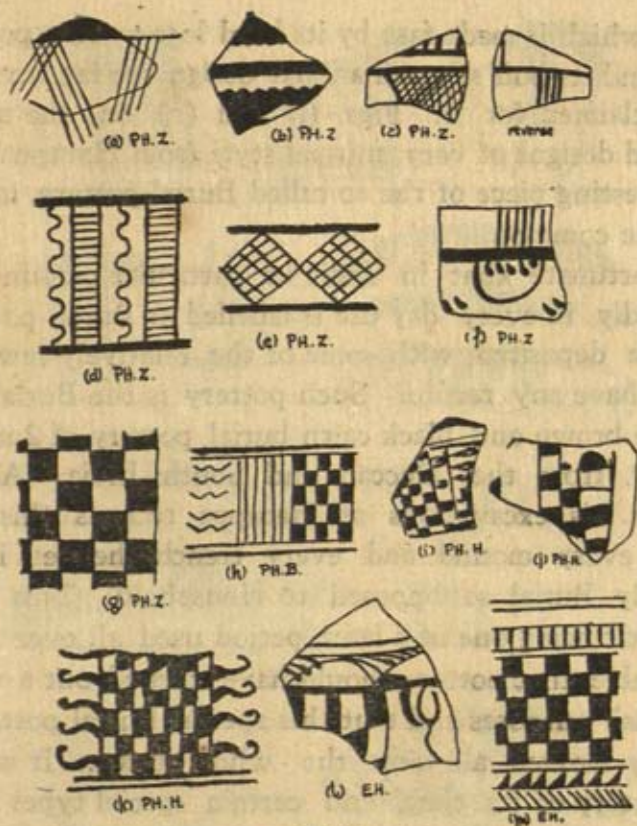
additional red lines." He then speaks of "buff-ware" as if there were a definite period employing solely buff coloured pottery.

The facts as observed by me are not nearly so simple as this. The earliest ware is characterized by pots having a variety of allied decoration and slip. The pottery itself is mostly pale buff or pinkish buff but sometimes pink, with cream, pinkish cream or greenish cream slip, and black, brown, dark brown or red brown decoration. Examples of this are : Pl. I (d) (g), (i) to (l) ; Pl. II (e) to (m) ; Pl. III (b) ; Pl. IV (a) to (c) ; Pl. XI (a). This style is definitely earlier than the equally well fabricated pots with very dark red slip as shown in Pl. I (e) to (g). These are quite often of buff pottery, but are found also in pinkish buff, pink and grey. The animal figure as shown in Pl. III (e) has become extremely elongated, and the exaggeration of the pot shoulders, mentioned by Ross as being found in the later phases, is beginning to appear. This style of pottery retaining its dark red slip, but with its patterns in black becoming more and more conventionalised, reaches a point where the shoulder stands off from the pot in a thin rim about quarter of an inch or more deep. The animal figure by this time becomes so conventionalised as to be barely recognisable as will be seen from the example in Pl. III (f). If this exposition, showing as it does a great degree of elaboration over the earlier simplifications, would suffice, matters would still be relatively simple, but this is not so. Animal designs of very similar type are found on all sorts of pottery which cannot readily be fitted in with the accepted fabrics of the Bull Layer. Reference to Plate III will show animals on all sorts of pottery fabrics thick and thin, with sections in bright pink, pale purple, and coarse poorly fired grey. Where exactly these fit in I don't know, but they indicate the need for fewer generalization, more caution and more excavation.

#### INDUS VALLEY POTTERY

I have already made reference to the fragment from Moghul Gundai noticed by Prof. Gordon Childe as having a typical Indus Valley pattern of intersecting circles ; Mr. Stuart Piggott also quotes Mr. Basil Grey as authority for a statement that the uppermost level at Rana Gundai produced pottery showing Harappa influence. This is possible, but there is





PL. IV.

nothing in Brig. Ross's notes and drawings made at the time to suggest that this is so. Out of the large number of sherds I have seen, only the one quoted by Gordon Childe and the two sherds shown on Pl. VIII, (n) and (o) from Duki have any resemblance to typical Indus patterns. Even so the piece from Moghul Gundai with its polychrome colouring and the ones from Duki of a totally dissimilar fabric to that found anywhere in the Indus Valley have merely approximations to Indus motifs and nothing else to connect them with those cultures.

Just what the Bull sherds of the Zhob owe to Hissar I and Nineveh V is still very far from clear. The animal zones of Bampur and Khurab in Makran have closer affinity with the latter than the former, and but little echo is found in the Indus Valley. It is much too early yet to attempt any dating. Very few animal designs are found on true Harappa sherds; Pl. IX (k) shows a young deer or goat apparently being suckled



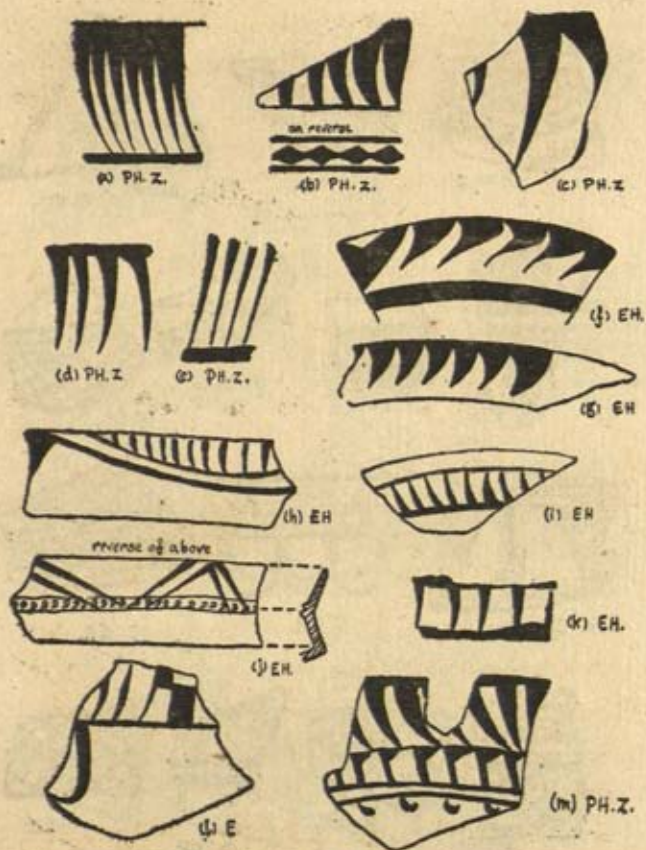
by its mother which is made fast by its hind legs to two posts, this is from Chanhudaro and its buff slip and animal design are far from typical of the Harappa date claimed for it. Figs. (l) and (n) on the same plate show Harappa Period designs of very unusual style from Harappa itself. Fig. (m) shows an interesting piece of the so called Burial pottery, in which animal motifs are quite common.

It is unfortunate that in India in particular certain pottery which was undoubtedly in every day use is labelled as Burial pottery, because it happened to be deposited with some of the relatively few ancient burials of which we have any record. Such pottery is the Burial pottery at Harappa, and the brown and black cairn burial pottery of 2nd. Cent. B. C.—3rd Cent. A. D. from the Deccan and South India. Although Pandit Sarup Vats in his excavations at Harappa records this so called burial pottery from every mound and every trench, he sets it on one side as being definitely Burial as opposed to Household. This must be wholly wrong this fabric being one of a later period used all over the whole area. It is inconceivable that potters should have turned out a wholly different fabric for burial purposes and that this special Burial pottery should have been carelessly broken all over the whole town. It was of course the household pottery of its time, and certain special types and motifs were used in contemporary burial jars. The proper position chronologically of this pottery, for which a name will have to be found, can only be determined when the full evidence of the cemeteries at Harappa has been properly co-ordinated, and that is not yet.

#### THE PAINTED POTTERY OF EARLY HISTORIC AND MODERN TIMES

This painted pottery is introduced to show that it exists in considerable quantities in the districts of Peshawar, Mardan, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Montgomery on many sites definitely of the Early Historic and possibly of the mediaeval periods, and where painted pottery is produced to-day. Various motifs are taken in turn, Plate IV showing "chessboard" patterns which are found from extremely early times, and have a wide distribution in time and date and therefore small dating value. Plate V shows tapered rim ornamentation. Plates VI and VII show cross-hatching which is so



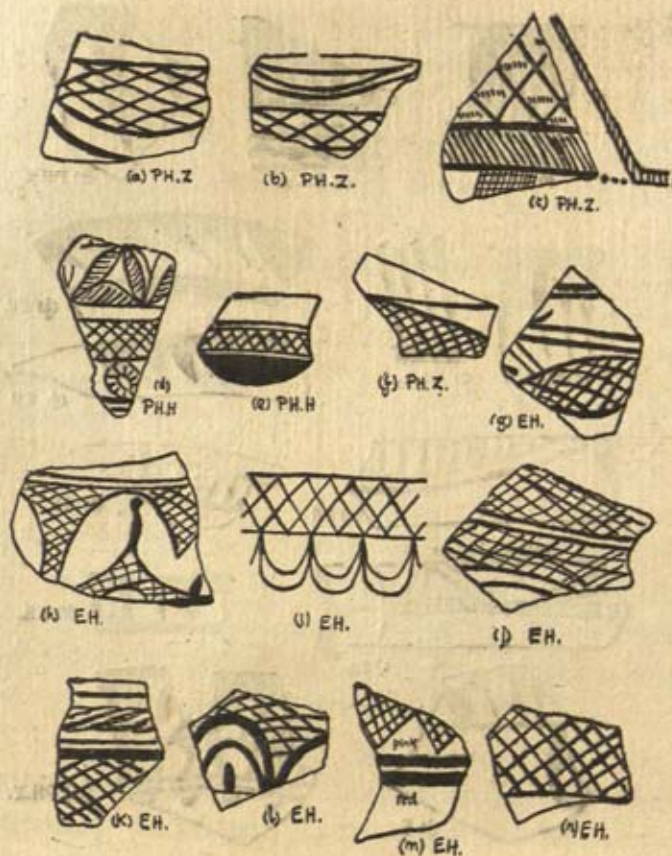


Pl. V

common in every place and every age producing painted pottery that it can be taken as having no dating value in itself. Plate VIII shows triangular designs and, together with IX, typical patterns from Harappa. Plate X has some interesting designs ; firstly there is the bull from Mehi attached to a "cult object" looking more like a microphone than anything else, this object is more closely related in its idea to the "standard" placed before bulls on seals at Mohenjodaro than is the spear-head to which bulls on Mehi pottery are more usually tethered. Squares divided into black and white triangles are of three, possibly four, different periods : Harappa, Burial, Zhob and Early Historic, the last named from Taxila. The definitely Early Historic peacock (m) from Akhkari Dheri, Risalpur is of great interest when compared with those from Harappa.

We now come to a pattern which may prove to be of the greatest





PL. VI

importance in determining the age of painted pottery in India. This is the loop pattern in which loops or series of loops fill one of the zones of decoration. A true loop pattern is a succession of separate loops each fineing off to a point where it meets the next loop and a circumferential line, and should not be confused with the continuous wavy line pattern particularly when this touches a circumferential line and gives an appearance of a succession of loops. It seems that the pottery bearing this loop design is late rather than early. From the Zhob this pattern is found in two, possibly three instances among the examples I have seen from all sources. Pl. VI (a) and (b) show one possible and one definite example from Moghul Kila which are probably late rather than early, and Pl. XI (a) gives the rim of a dish from Rana Gundai which with its external cord decoration and additional impressed pattern is certainly late. I have not been able to trace





Pl. VII

this pattern anywhere in the Indus Valley until the Jhukar period, where it appears as shown in Pl. XVII (a), (c), (h) to (j) on Jhukar fabrics from Chanhu-daro and other sites in Sind. In the early Historic Period this pattern becomes one of the most frequent. It is noticeable therefore that whereas such patterns as cross-hatched, chess board, wavy line, and squares divided into triangles have persisted at all times from very remote periods, this does not hold good in the instance of the loop pattern which seems to make its first appearance in the Jhukar period.

Pl. XIII also has examples of patterns of irregular wavy or "squigly" lines; a striking similarity, by reason of a dotted circle appearing in both, being found in (d) Burial Type pottery from Harappa and (g) a pattern from Khingranwala. The latter site, though not far from Harappa, has no Harappa or Burial Type pottery on it, all its remains being of the E. H.





PL. VIII

Period. The remaining Figs. on this plate show how the combination of vertical lines and loops or circles has persisted down to modern times.

Pl. XIV shows a number of plant form patterns. Fig. (b) from Twin Mounds and (c) from Rana Gundai, sites in the Zhob, are both to my mind of E. H. date. There is nothing about the style, appearance or fabric of this pottery that suggests a Proto-historic date; of the same style and fabric as these are (d) and (f) of Pl. XVIII, both from Twin Mounds. There is no striking similarity between the plant form patterns of the P-H. and E. H. periods. Pl. XV shows pottery from the Zhob which does not fit in with any of the normal types as described by Brig. Ross or any of the other writers. It comes from a variety of sites and is mostly of a coarse style especially (a) and (b) from Moghul Kila and (c) from Rana Gundai. These are examples of a multiplicity of sherds which have got to be fitted





PL. IX

in before we can see the cultures of the Zhob as a coherent whole. It is possible that many of such types are late, particularly (k) from Moghul Kila which is typically E. H. in its style and fabric.

Pl. XVI shows polychrome fragments from the Zhob of which (a) to (i), (n) and (p) appear to be of the same style of polychrome as recorded by Sir Aurel Stein who published a number of typical examples, and which seem also to have much in common with the polychrome of the Jhukar period as exemplified by Pl. XVII (b) from Chanhu-daro. Fig. (k) with its dark red and greenish cream slips and its coarse fabric is identical with the coarse fragments with animal patterns shown on Pl. III (b) and (d). The buff and dark red pottery exemplified in (j), (m), (l), (o) and in Pl. V (m) from Rana Gundai and Duki are of a type and period of their own and



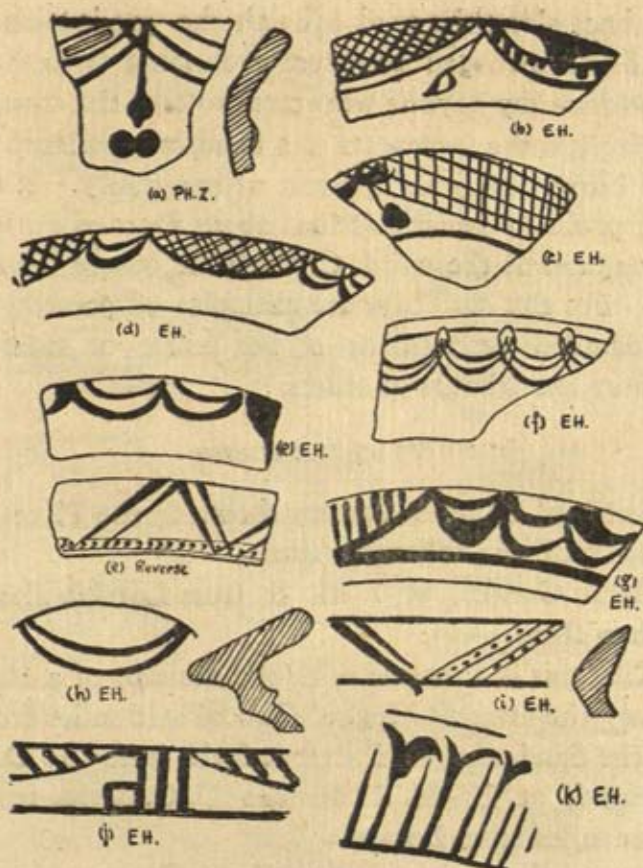


PL. X

would appear to be late rather than early. These also find no place in any present classification.

Plates XVIII, XIX and XX (a) to (g) contain odds and ends of designs which do not find a place elsewhere. The modern pottery, Pl. XX (h), (i), (j), (l) and (o) shown with three examples from Makran and the Zhob are of great interest and require special mention. In (h) one sees a curved semi-swastika design in the centre, which may be compared with the pattern from Khurab below, an intersecting circle pattern and triangles with cross-hatching ; (i) has ladder pattern ( see also Pl. XVIII ), end to end triangles ( see also Pl. X ) and wavy line ; (j) has pipal leaves ( see also Pls. IX and X ), cross-hatched triangles and a design somewhat similar to (n) on the same Plate ; (l) has cross-hatched triangles, wavy line pattern and loop pattern, the distinction between these as mentioned





Pl. XI

above being clearly brought out here ; (m) from the Zhob and (o) may also be readily compared and show strong similarity. I may say that when shown photographs of the originals of the modern dishes and pots whose designs are given on Pl. XX even the "very elect" were deceived at any rate at first glance.

This short resumé has taken us through the material which I have assembled. The value does not lie so much in my notes which do little except point out the difficulties which beset the study of painted pottery and the dangers of too hasty generalization, but in the designs themselves which represent for my wife and myself, literally hundreds of miles of walking, thousands of miles of motoring and many many hours of searching head downwards in the sun on mounds all over Northern India. It does not set out to be a Corpus of painted pottery designs but it takes us some



considerable distance along the road towards the production of such an record. I wish I had managed to secure even more modern examples, but this can still be done by anyone who cares to take the trouble. I myself picked up at Harappa the fragments of a handsome painted jar which had fallen and been broken only an hour or so previously. If these notes do anything to give pause to generalizations about Painted Pottery and to the use in this connection of the word Chalcolithic, it will have attained part of its purpose. For the rest here are examples of painted designs which may with the detailed descriptions of the fabric of most of them serve as a basis to lighten the labours of others.

#### NOTES ON THE PLATES

The patterns of Painted Pottery shown in the Plates and described in these notes are from the following sites.

Zhob : Rana Gundai, at 7 M. S. from Loralai, along the Loralai-Dhera Ghazi Khan Road,

Moghul Kila, this is a mound with the remains of a Moghul Fort and is almost certainly the same as Moghul Gundai ; 16 miles from Loralai and one mile along the Sandeman road after it forks from the D. G. Khan road.

Small Mound, at 10 M. S. on the D. G. Khan road ; also Small Mound (3), three miles from Loralai.

Duki, a large shallow mound one mile on Quetta side of Duki.

Twin Mounds, one mile south of Loralai. Also the site of Sur Jangal.

Baluchistan : Kulli, Mehi and Nandara.

Makran : Shahi Tump, Bampur, Khurab and Spet.

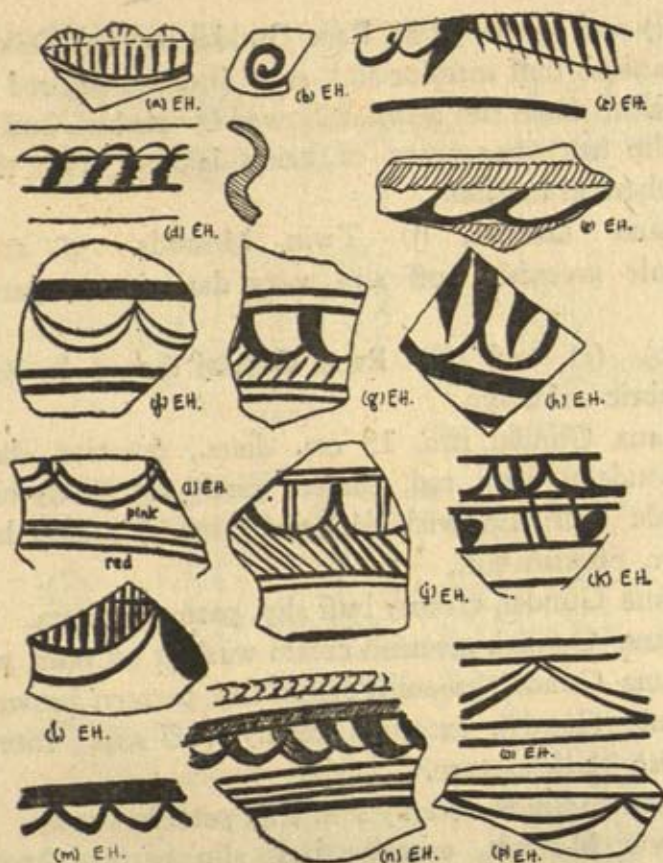
Indus Valley : Harappa, Jhukar and Chanhu-daro. Also sites in Sind referred to by N. G. Majumdar in his Memoir "Explorations in Sind."

Peshawar and Mardan Districts : Bala Hissar, Kula Dheri, Babo Dheri, Chalela Dheri, Akhkari Dheri, Turlandi, and Risalpur.

Rawalpindi District : Budho 2, a site about two miles East of the cement factory at Wah ; Taxila and Soan River.

Lahore District : Three sites on the Grand Trunk road between 10 and 20 miles west of Lahore.





PL. XII

Montgomery District : Akbar and Khingranwala (Okara Tehsil),  
Faquiran near Montgomery and Shah Yakka (Dipalpur Tehsil).

The pottery is classified under three headings—Proto-Historic (PH.), Early Historic (EH.) and Modern. The term Early Historic indicates the period from the commencement of the Mauryas to the end of the Guptas, say from about 300 B. C. to 500 A. D. In the case of the pottery of the Early Historic period unless otherwise stated the pottery is bright red with a clear black pattern.

Plate I.

- (a), (b) and (c), Rana Gundai found by Brig. Ross ; exact fabric unknown.
- (d) Rana Gundai, cream slip on pink surface, dark brown pattern sec. pale pinkish buff.



- (e), (f) and (g) pot rims, Rana Gundai and (h) Duki, dark red slip pinkish buff interior and sec. Interior has red slip of varying width from rim down, followed by pinkish buff, pattern black. Slip has appearance of being laid on with the jar on a fast wheel in motion.
- (i) Rana Gundai, (j) Twin Mounds, (k) and (l) Duki, pale greenish buff slip, very dark brown pattern sec. pink.

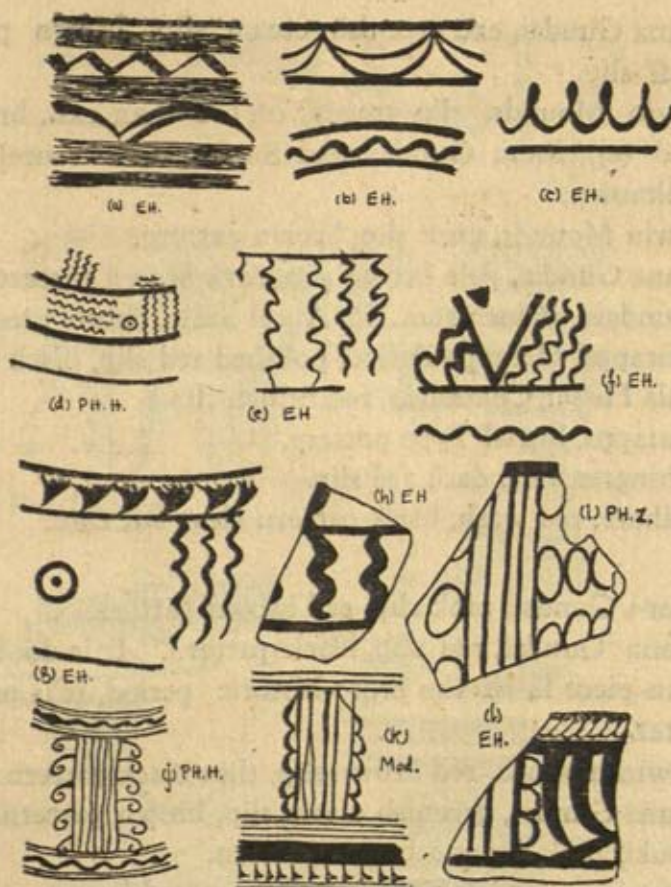
## Plate II.

- (a), (b), (c) and (d) Rana Gundai found by Brig. Ross, exact fabric unknown.
- (e) Rana Gundai, rim, 18 cm. diam., exterior, darkish buff slip smudged with red, pattern partly red partly black. Interior pale buff slip with dark red paint  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches deep from rim, sec. pinkish buff.
- (f) Rana Gundai, creamy buff slip, pattern brown.
- (g) Rana Gundai, greenish cream washed on pink, pattern brown.
- (h) Rana Gundai, greenish cream slip, pattern brown.
- (i) Rana Gundai, exterior creamy buff slip. Interior pale pink with black pattern.
- (j) Twin Mounds, creamy buff slip, pattern brown.
- (k) Twin Mounds, exterior buff slip pattern brown. Interior, grey brown slip sec. pink.
- (l) Unrecorded Zhob site, greyish cream slip, pattern black, sec. pale brown.
- (m) Unrecorded site, creamy buff slip, pattern brown.
- (n) Harappa, sherd of the Harappa period, polished dark red slip, pattern black.

## Plate III.

- (a) Twin Mounds, ext. dull pink slip, red brown pattern. Int. brighter pink slip, sec. pale purple.
- (b) Twin Mounds, ext. greenish cream slip, brown hachure pattern. Int. pinkish buff slip, brown animal pattern, sec. pink, dull in centre, fired to bright pink at surfaces.
- (c) Rana Gundai, greenish cream slip, pattern brown. Thick-sectioned coarse pottery.





Pl. XIII

- (d) Rana Gundai, as for (c), but thicker and coarser.  
 (e) Rana Gundai, very dark red slip, dark purplish pattern, sec. pale buff.  
 (f) Rana Gundai, red slip, pattern black, sec. pale red.  
 (g) Twin Mounds, pale pink slip, pattern dark brown, sec. pale creamy grey.  
 (h) Twin Mounds, greenish slip, pattern brown, sec. grey.  
 (i), (j) and (k) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.  
 (l) Kulli, Baluchistan and (m) Khurab, Makran. Sir Aurel Stein' fabric unknown.

Plate IV.

- (a) Twin Mounds, buff slip, brown pattern.



- (b) Rana Gundai, ext. greenish cream slip, brown pattern. Int. buff slip.
- (c) Twin Mounds, slip greener on int. than ext., brown pattern.
- (d) and (e) Rana Gundai, and Surjangan, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.
- (f) Twin Mounds, pink slip, brown pattern.
- (g) Rana Gundai, pale brown slip, dark brown pattern.
- (h) Nundara, Baluchistan, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.
- (i) Harappa, Harappa Period, polished red slip, black pattern.
- (j) Bala Hissar Charsadda, red brown slip.
- (k) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.
- (l) Khingranwala, dark red slip.
- (m) Lahore, red wash, black pattern clear but thin.

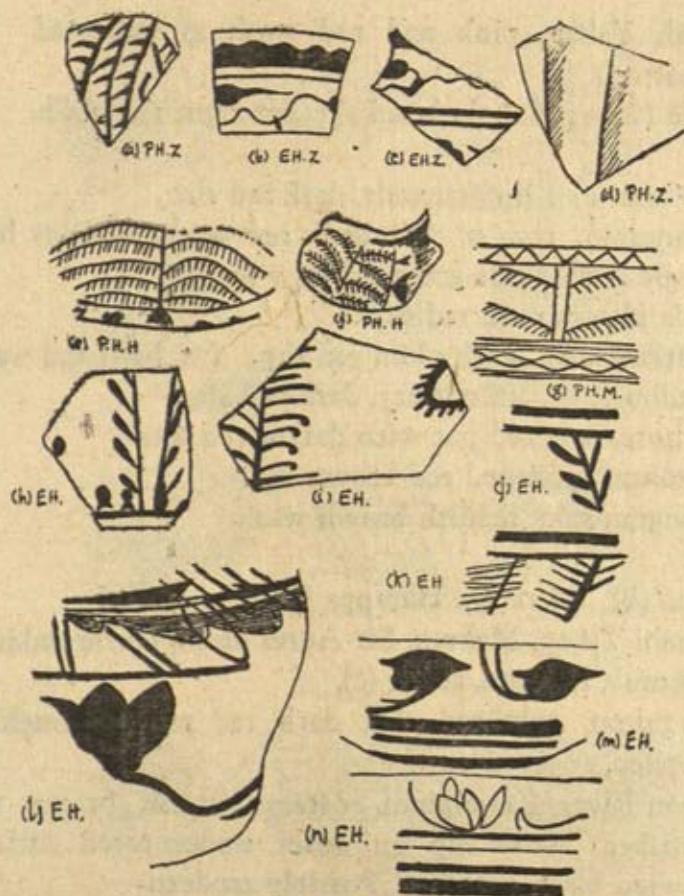
## Plate V.

- (a) Rana Gundai, pink slip, red brown pattern.
- (b) Rana Gundai, red slip, black pattern. It is doubtful whether this piece is of the proto-historic period, it is probably much later.
- (c) Twin mounds, red brown slip, thin black pattern.
- (d) Rana Gundai, greenish cream slip, brown pattern.
- (e) Duki, pink slip red brown pattern.
- (f) Faquiran, rim of Dish, red slip, sec. red brown.
- (g) Lahore rim of dish, thin black pattern.
- (h) and (j) Lahore, pottery grey with a thick red slip.
- (i) Faquiran, rim of dish, red wash, purplish red pattern.
- (k) Kula Dheri, slight polished red slip.
- (l) Chalela Dheri, red wash, black pattern thin and dull.
- (m) Duki, shows interior pattern of bowl, black pattern on dark red slip, Below bottom line of pattern—pink pot.

## Plate VI.

- (a) Moghul Kila, fine pottery, pink slip, red brown pattern.
- (b) Moghul Kila, fairly coarse pottery, ext. dark cream slip, red pattern, Int. brown slip.
- (c) Rana Gundai, dish with flaring sides, red pottery, no slip, pale thin black pattern, sec. grey.





Pl. XIV

- (d) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery.
- (e) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.
- (f) Moghul Kila, above horizontal line dark red slip, below pink slip, dark brown pattern.
- (g) Khingranwala, dark red slip, sec. pale red.
- (h) Khingranwala, slight pale red wash, black pattern very thin and rather smudgy.
- (i) Taxila, red slip.
- (j) Shah Yakkā, no slip except in extreme bottom corner below lowest line where red slip, thin black pattern.
- (k) Khingranwala, red wash rough applied, cord pattern.
- (l) Khingranwala, dark red slip.



(m) Shah Yakka, pink and red wash as indicated, thin black pattern.

(n) Bala Hissar, Ext. dark red slip, int. light red wash.

Plate VII.

(a) (b) and (c) Khingranwala, dark red slip.

(d) Faquiran, rim of flat dish red wash, smudgy black pattern, single and double grooves below pattern.

(e) Bala Hissar, dark red slip.

(f) Turlandi, ext. dark plum red slip. Int. light red wash.

(g) Budho 2, brown pottery, dark red slip.

(h) Lahore, pale red pot with darker red wash.

(i) Budho 2, polished red-brown slip.

(j) Kingranwala, reddish brown wash.

Plate VIII.

(a) and (b) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery.

(c) Shahi Tump, Makran, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.

(d) Khurab, Makran, as for (c),

(e) Faquiran, pale red slip, dark red pattern roughly and thinly applied.

(f) Soan River, Rawalpindi, pottery reddish brown with slightly polished pink slip on outer undecorated surface. Thinly applied black pattern. Possibly modern.

(g) Budho 2, pink pottery with polished red brown slip, dull black pattern.

(h) Moghul Gundai, (probably same as Moghul Kila) Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.

(i) Site unrecorded, but definitely early historic. Rim of bowl, grey brown pottery with pink polished slip, brown main pattern cross-hatched lines bright red.

(j) Faquiran, thin red wash.

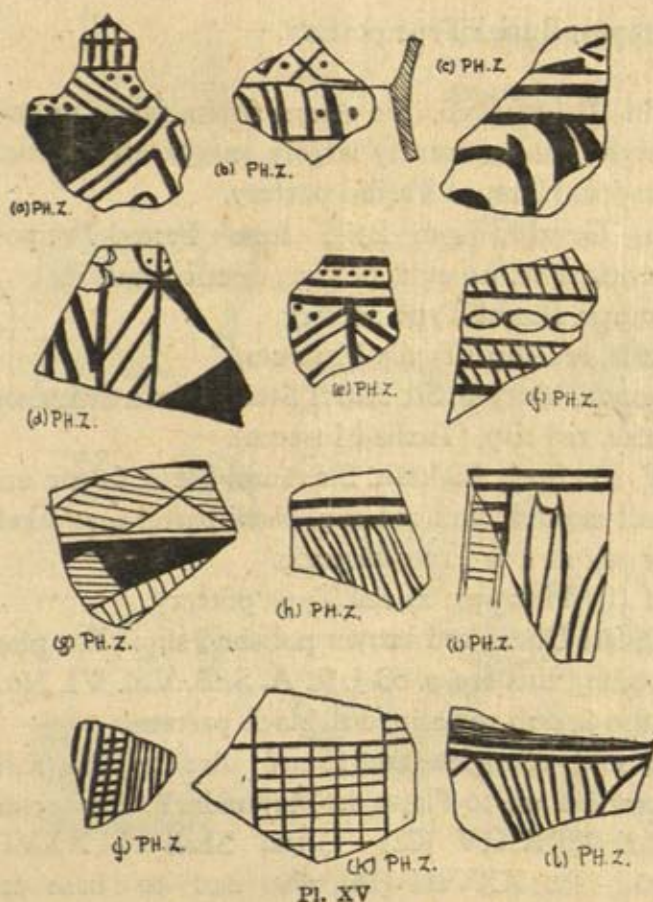
(k) Khingranwala, red wash.

(l) Bala-Hissar, dark red slip.

(m) Taxila, red slip (Taxila Museum).

(n) and (o) Duki, red and dark red polished slips, pattern black.





Pl. XV

(p) (q) and (r) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery.  
Plate IX.

- (a) to (i) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery.
- (j) Harappa, Burial Type pottery, an unusual plant-form design for this type of pottery.
- (k) Chanhudaro, described in *Illustrated London News* as "Harappa Period, young ibex eating from a tree". As it is a buff slip with matt black pattern, is it far from typical Harappa ware. Also it is not as described, but shows a young animal apparently taking suck from its mother. In any case the large object is an animal and not a tree, though it may possibly be a peacock.
- (l) and (n) Harappa, Harappa Period, unusual figure designs.



## (m) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.

## Plate X.

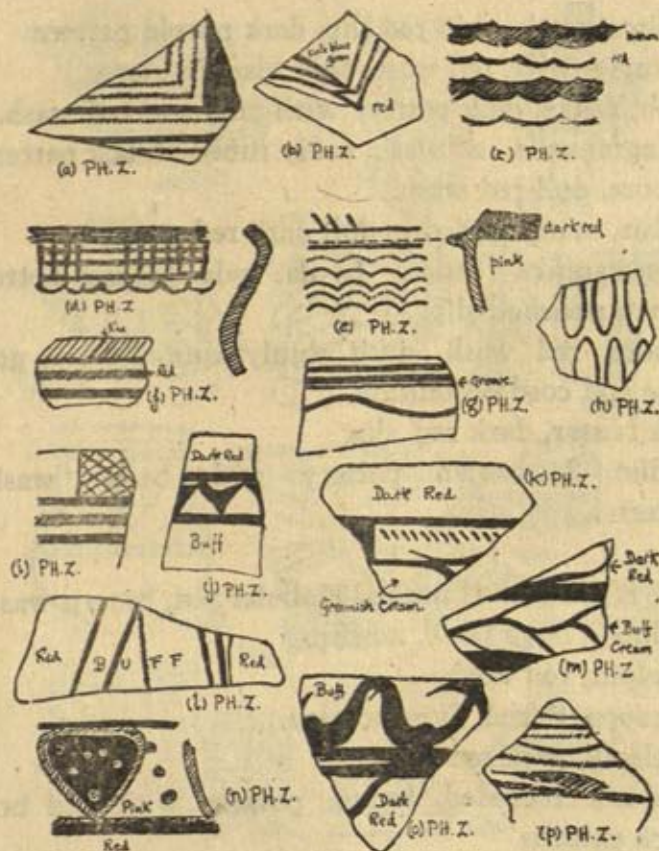
- (a) Mehi, Baluchistan, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown. Animal on right has apparently largely exaggerated testicles.
- (b) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery.
- (c) Rana Gundai, from Brig. Ross's Period IV, possibly of Early Historic date, no evidence at present available.
- (d) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.
- (e) Taxila, red slip, (Taxila Museum).
- (f) Bampur, Makran, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.
- (g) Taxila, red slip, (Taxila Museum).
- (h) and (i) Spet, Makran, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.
- (j) Small mound, dark red slip, black pattern, as likely to be Early Historic as it is Proto-historic.
- (k) and (l) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.
- (m) Akhkari Dheri, red brown polished slip. For photo and points regarding this see p. 63 J. R. A. S. B. Vol. VI. No. 2. 1940.
- (n) Budho 2, dull red slip, dull black pattern.

End to end triangles are found also at the following places, references are to Plates in Majumdar's "Explorations in Sind", Lohri Pl. XXIV (21), Ghazi Shah Pl. XXVII (23), Pandi Wahi Pl. XXVIII (14), also end to base triangles, Amri, Pl. XVIII (17).

## Plate XI. All designs on this plate are on rims of dishes or bowls.

- (a) Rana Gundai, buff slip, red brown pattern, impressed decoration in top left corner.
- (b) Shah Yakka, red brown pattern on orange red slip, with pale orange slip on reverse.
- (c) Khingranwala, brown slip on brown pottery, ill executed dark brown pattern.
- (d) Site not recorded, red slip, smudgy black pattern.
- (e) Lahore, similar to Plate V. (h) and (j), pottery grey with thick red slip.
- (f) Khingranwala, red slip with black pattern clear but somewhat shadowed by smudging, pink wash on reverse.





PL. XVI

- (g) Site not recorded, pot rim with incised cord pattern on edge, red wash, black pattern faint on original.  
 (h) Chalela Dheri, pink wash, pale thin red brown pattern.  
 (i) Site not recorded, dark red slip.  
 (j) Lahore, brown pottery with pale pink wash, thin black pattern.  
 (k) Khingranwala, dark brown pottery.

## Plate XII.

- (a) Akbar, red slip.  
 (b) Turlandi, brown slip, dull black pattern.  
 (c) Montgomery Dist., pink pottery, brown slip, dark red pattern.  
 (d) Mankiala, red wash.  
 (e) Khingranwala, red brown pottery, cord decoration.  
 (f) Lahore, dark orange-red polish slip, dark red pattern.



- (g) Khingranwala, thin red slip, dark purple pattern.
- (h) Khingranwala, red wash, thin black pattern.
- (i) Shah Yakka, pink pottery with pink and red wash.
- (j) Khingranwala, red wash, badly rubbed black pattern.
- (k) Lahore, dull red wash.
- (l) Akbar, orange red slip, dull dark red pattern.
- (m) Dharmarajika Stupa, Taxila, pale brown pottery with red brown polished slip.
- (n) Lahore, red wash, with thinly painted white ground in main zone and cord decoration.
- (o) Bala Hissar, dark red slip.
- (p) Budho 2, brown pottery with brown wash, dull black pattern.

#### Plate XIII.

- (a) Bala Hissar, small necked globular pot, brown wash.
- (b) Budho 2, large bowl, no slip.
- (c) Risalpur, red wash.
- (d) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.
- (e) Turlandi, dark red slip.
- (f) Site not recorded, brown pottery with red brown slip, thin black pattern.
- (g) Khingranwala, dark red wash, black pattern very smudged and indistinct.
- (h) Babo Dheri, dark red wash.
- (i) Duki, pink pottery with pink wash, pale brown pattern.
- (j) Harappa, Burial Type pottery.
- (k) Soan River, Rawalpindi, red slip, dull black pattern, probably modern.
- (l) Khingranwala, red wash, dull black pattern.

#### Plate XIV.

- (a) Moghul Kila, ext. greenish cream slip, brown pattern. Int. red slip, unevenly fired red and grey sec.
- (b) Twin Mounds, rim of dish 32 cm. diam., light grey pottery, dark pattern.
- (c) Rana Gundai, dark grey pottery, black pattern. (b) & (c) are





Pl. XVII

- almost certainly of a late date, probably of Early Hist. Period.
- (d) Duki, pale brown pottery with pinkish buff wash, brown pattern.
  - (e) and (f) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery.
  - (g) Bampur, Makran, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.
  - (h) Budho 2, dark red slip.
  - (i) Bala Hissar, dark red slip.
  - (j) Chalela Dheri, brown pottery with red slip.
  - (k) Khingranwala, purplish red pottery with creamy pale brown slip, red brown pattern.
  - (l) Akbar, streaky red slip.
  - (m) Akbar, carinated pot, dark red slip, dull black pattern.
  - (n) Akbar, carinated pot, red wash.



## Plate XV.

- (a) and (b) Moghul Kila, very coarse pottery some of which has raised cord pattern indicating a late possibly E. H. date. Pink slip, plum pattern, coarse pale grey sec.
- (c) Rana Gundai, coarse thick, pottery with pink slip, plum pattern.
- (d) Small Mound, thick pale grey pottery with red slip and plum pattern.
- (e) Small Mound (3), pink pottery with pinkish grey slip and red brown pattern.
- (f) Twin Mounds, polychrome red-brown and black patterns on pink and red slips.
- (g) Duki, no slip, ext. half of sec. brown with black pattern, int. half of sec. grey.
- (h) Duki, ext. half of sec. brown with black pattern. Int. half of section red, no slip.
- (i) Twin Mounds, greenish slip, dark and light brown pattern.
- (j) Twin Mounds, buff slip, red brown pattern, pink sec.
- (k) Moghul Kila, coarse thick red pottery with red wash and dark plum pattern, possibly of late E. H. date.
- (l) Moghul Kila, fairly coarse red pottery with greenish cream slip, red pattern.

## Plate XVI. This Plate shows examples of polychrome pottery from the Zhob.

- (a) Sur Jangal, red and brown pattern on buff slip. This fragment was given me by Mlle. S. Corbiau.
- (b) Rana Gundai, coarse thick brown pottery with red and pale bluish green slips as indicated, brown pattern.
- (c) Rana Gundai, greenish cream slip, red and brown pattern on interior.
- (d) Rana Gundai, dark brown pattern on greenish cream slip mottled with patches of smudgy pink and blue.
- (e) Rana Gundai, ext. pink slip, red and black pattern. Int. dark red rim on pink slip.
- (f) Rana Gundai, ext. buff slip, red and black pattern. Int. red slip.





Pl. XVIII

- (g) Twin Mounds, slip, above groove, dark red, below, greenish cream, pattern black.
- (h) Rana Gundai, alternate rows of red and black ovals on pink slip.
- (i) Rana Gundai, pale grey pottery with red slip. Pattern—cross hatching and centre band dark red, rest black.
- (j) Moghul Kila, dark red and buff slips, dark brown pattern.
- (k) Twin Mounds, thick coarse pottery, dark red and greenish cream slips, black pattern.
- (l) Rana Gundai, red and buff slips, pattern—heavy lines plum, shaded line scarlet.
- (m) Rana Gundai, dark red and creamy buff slips, pattern black.
- (n) Rana Gundai, black portion black, shaded lines and dots—red on pink and red slips as indicated.



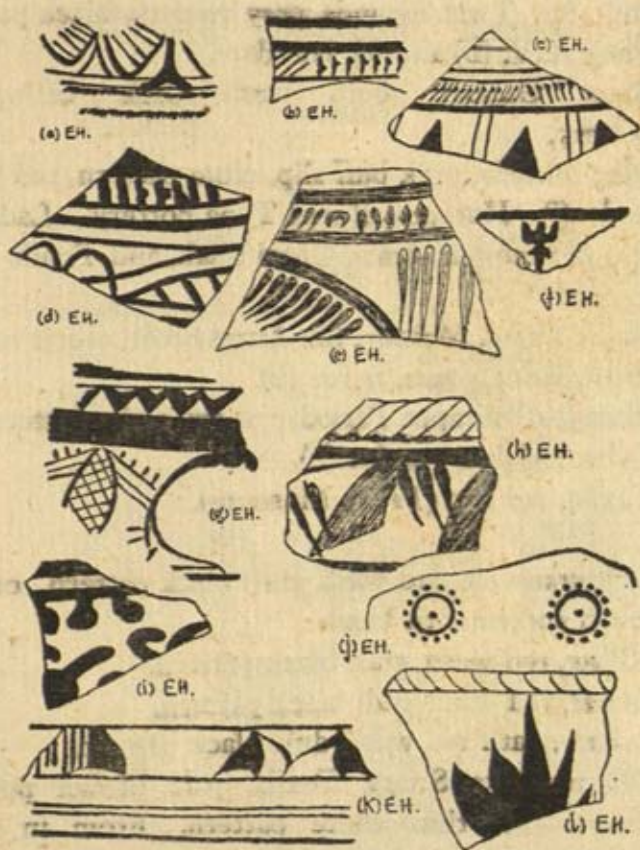
- (o) Duki, thick pottery red with grey sec., buff and dark red slips, dark brown pattern.
- (p) Moghul Kila, cream slip, heavy lines dark brown, shaded lines red.

# Plate XVII.

This Plate includes pottery from Chanhudaro, Amri, Jhukar, Lohumjo-daro, Trihni, Lohri, Pokhran and Shahjokotiro, and mention here and in Pls. X and XVIII is made of Khajur, Ghazi Shah, Arabjothana and Pandi Wahi all sites in Sind explored by Mr. M. G. Majumdar. Only a few specimens that are specially relevant have been shown here out of the mass of decorated sherds illustrated in Memoir 48 of The Archaeological Survey—"Explorations in Sind." Reference should be made to this work by anyone who is studying early Indian painted pottery.

- (a)—(e) Chanhudaro, Jhukar period pottery taken from Dr. Mackay's article in The Illustrated London News.
- (f) Periano Gundai, Zhob, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown, copied from "The Hissar Sequence" by Stuart Piggott, Antiquity, Dec. 1943.
- (g) Amri, Harappa Period, dark red slip, black pattern.
- (h) Jhukar, Jhukar Period, red wash, black pattern.
- (i) Lohumjo-daro, Jhukar Period, red wash, dark brown pattern, cord marks on outer surface.
- (j) Trihni, Jhukar Period, pinkish creamy slip, dark brown pattern. Figs. (h) to (j) should be compared with Pl. XI (a) and Pl. XII.
- (k) Chanhudaro, Harappa Period, red slip, black pattern, but compare with Pl. XI (j) classed by Sarup Vats as Burial Type pottery from Harappa.
- (l) Chanhudaro, apparently of Harappa Period but an unique design of stylised stags, red slip, black pattern.
- (m) Shahjokotiro, uncommon design for this region of a line of ibexes, red slip, black pattern.
- (n) and (o) Trihni, examples of the unique floral designs found on pottery at this site, pattern black and reddish brown on a pale red or buff slip. Fig. (j) above from the same





PL. XIX.

site tends to place this culture alongside the Jhukar Culture.

- (p) Lohri, cream slip, pattern dark brown.
- (q) Pokhran, buff slip, pattern dark brown, pottery light red. Chevron pattern is also found at Khajur, Arabjo-thana and Pandi Wahi. See also Pl. XX (d) for example of chevron in E. H. Period.

#### Plate XVIII.

- (a) Twin Mounds, dark red slip, black pattern.
- (b) Twin mounds, pale red slip, smudgy black pattern.
- (c) Twin Mounds, pink pottery with apparently reserved slip pattern of black on red slip, probably of late date.
- (d) Twin Mounds, red slip, black pattern, probably of late date.



- (e) and (f) Twin mounds, grey pottery, black pattern similar to Plate XIV, (b) and (c), late date.
- (g) Rana Gundai, buff wash, dark brown pattern, red pottery.
- (h) Moghul Kila, pink buff slip, plum pattern, red pottery.
- (i) and (j) Harappa, Burial Type pottery. Ladder patterns are also common at Amri, Ghazi Shah, and Pandi Wahi, all sites in Sind.
- (k) Shahi Tump, Makran, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.
- (l) Mehi, Baluchistan, as for (k).
- (m) Harappa, Harappa Period pottery, scale pattern.
- (n) Kolwa, Makran, as for (k).
- (o) Taxila, red slip (Taxila Museum).

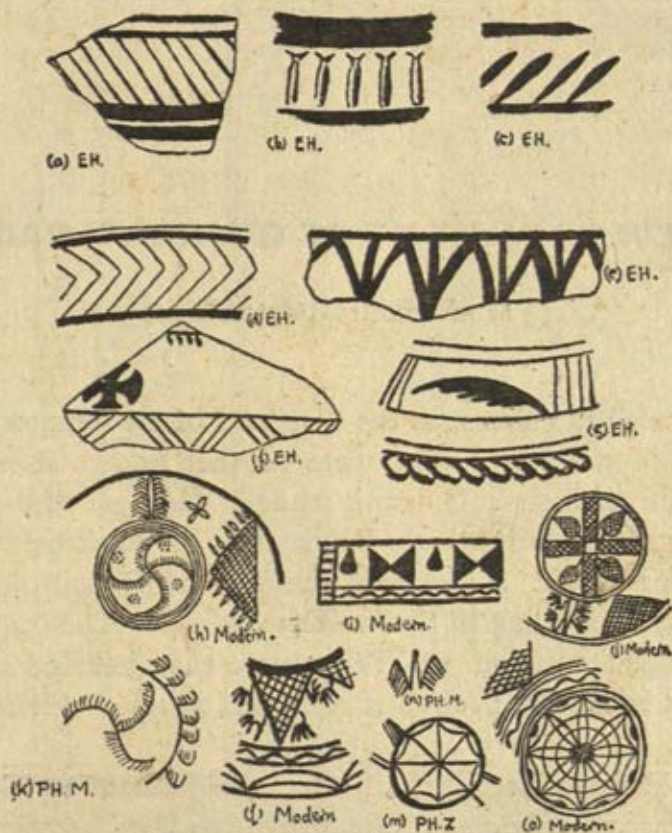
#### Plate XIX.

- (a) Khingranwala, red wash, thin black pattern, ornamented with rough and smooth bands.
- (b) Akbar, red wash, thin black pattern.
- (c) Akbar, red wash, dull black pattern.
- (d) Lahore, dark red wash, dull black pattern.
- (e) Dharmarajika Stupa, Taxila, pale brown pottery with dark brown slip, thin white pattern. From in situ 2 feet below foundation level of large court enclosure in the N. W. corner of the D. S. group.
- (f) Khingranwala, red wash, dull black pattern.
- (g) Shah Yakka, dark red slip.
- (h) Site not recorded, pink pottery, thin brown wash, cord ornamentation and dull black pattern.
- (i) Dharmarajika Stupa, Taxila, red brown polished slip.
- (j) Khingranwala, red brown wash.
- (k) Akbar, carinated pot, red wash, dull black pattern.
- (l) Site not recorded, dark red slip.

#### Plate XX.

- (a) Lahore, red wash.
- (b) Mankiala, red slip, plum red pattern.
- (c) Dharmarajika Stupa, Taxila, reddish brown slip.





Pl. XX.

- (d) Budho 2, pink pottery with polished brown slip, dull black pattern.  
 (e) Bala Hissar, red brown pottery with red wash.  
 (f) and (g) Taxila, red slip (Taxila Museum).  
 (h), (i), (j), and (o), these are patterns from modern pots made in Marden N. W. F. P.  
 (k) and (n) Khurab, Makran, Sir Aurel Stein, fabric unknown.  
 (m) Periano Gundai, Zhob, as for (k).



## A NEW DOCUMENT OF GUJARATI PAINTING

by NĀNĀLĀL CHAMANLĀL MEHTĀ

Some years ago almost at the threshold of my studies in Indian art, I ventured to designate what were till then known as Jaina paintings as specimens of a distinctive Gujarati school. Most of the material which was then available related to Jainism. The illustrated manuscript of Vasanta Vilās (1451 A.D.) was the first important document of non-Jaina paintings belonging to the western school. The name that I had given to these paintings has been more than justified as a result of the new material which has been discovered and studied during the last few years.

I would have preferred the term 'Rājasthāni' to 'Gujarati' painting but for the fact that the use of the former has been associated for a long time with the paintings mostly of the 17th and the 18th centuries belonging primarily to Jaipur which have been executed in a style totally different from what I have called 'Gujarati painting' from the 11th to the 16th centuries. It should, however, never be forgotten that old Gujarat was integrally a part of Rājasthān and if I have used the phrase 'Gujarati painting' it is because the bulk of the paintings of this school were produced in what is now called Gujarat and apparently the word Gujarati was considered a mark of distinction and used by singers, painters, and other artisans, at any rate, during the regime of Akbar. It is also curious to note that in a sixth century Tamil poem, Manimekhalai, there is a reference to the sculptures from Vardhamāna Puri or modern Wadhwan (Kathiawad). So even Kathiawad, which now apparently has but scanty remains of anything which may be called significantly artistic, had once upon a time a vogue and a reputation. On the whole, however, it may be said that Kathiawad does not appear to have played a



रिबुरिवसखीसंवा सोयं निखीवदिमा निलो॥  
 विषमिवसुधरक्मिर्यस्मिन्नुनोतिमनोगते।  
 हृदयमदयेतस्मिन्नेवपुनर्वलेतेबलाकुव  
 लयदृशांवाभःकामोतिकामनिरंकुशः॥६॥

बाधंविधेदिमलया निलयंचबाणप्राणानृदाणन  
 गृदंपुनराश्रयिष्ये। किंतेहतांतनगिनिहमयानंरौ  
 रंगा निमिंचममशाशुदेददादः॥३६॥ इतिश्रीगीतगो  
 विंदेसप्तमःसर्गः॥ छ। ॥ श्रीः॥ ॥ श्रीः॥ ॥









part of much importance in the artistic development of Gujarat and this would be borne out by the fact that Kathiawad, despite its inclusion of 'Saurashtra', is an incredibly barren and unproductive region of India, even more arid than the major portion of Marwar and is only important because of the enterprise of its people and the shrewdness of its chieftains. Agriculturally and, therefore, economically Kathiawad could not support any great centres of wealth or learning in the past and there are no traditions of any such centres that one can find.

The nomenclature of Gujarati painting derives added significance from the achievements of the Gujarati school of architecture which flourished for about 250 years beginning from the early 15th century. "With the reign of Mahmud I Begarha (1459-1511) came Gujarat's greatest days, and at the same time the building art of that country also attained its final and most sumptuous form." (Percy Brown, 'Indian Architecture' [Islamic Period] p. 53).

The fame of the Gujarati craftsmen appears to have been on a par with that of the painters, for one of the finest structures in Akbar's Fatehpur-Sikri, Jodhbai's Palace was entrusted to "artisans from Gujarat, one of the groups of workmen brought from distant parts to speed up the production of this vast project" (pp. 98-99, *ibid.*, also see 56-57). They merely continued the great traditions of Solanki if not earlier buildings.

I have always felt that in a country like India it is a mistake to divide art with reference to creeds, for it is well-known that the executants worked for patrons of every religion and that the distinction was really more geographical than theological. Apart from the fact that the local schools generally have their peculiar characteristics, the geographical classification has the further advantage of emphasizing the regional rather than religious characteristics of works of art. The Gujarati school has got certain characteristic features not only as regards paintings but also architecture, sculpture and dance. As a matter of fact, the school is really distinctive of its people; but it must be remembered that what is Gujarat at present is only an administrative arrangement and has nothing to do either with its real and cultural extension in space or time. Some years ago, I also met the well-known Gujars who lead a nomadic



existence on the steppes of Kashmir and graze cattle at a level of 12,000 to 14,000 feet above the sea level. The language of these people is said to be akin to Gujarati and it is perhaps probable that these people may have given their name to the district of Gujarat in the Punjab. A registered 'criminal' tribe in the district of Muzaffarnagar (United Provinces) called the Bāwariās, uses also a 'patois' strangely akin to Gujarati and, curiously enough, is addicted to non-violence in pursuit of its criminal activities ! This peculiar tribe believes in non-violent crime—crime which is carried out by an elaborate system of personation and fraud ! Whether the old Gujaratis now inhabiting the north and the north-western part of the Bombay Presidency came from these northern and nomadic ancestors, can be only a matter of conjecture. There can, however, be no doubt that they have had the closest affinities with Rajasthan and that the boundaries of Gujarat and the Gujarati culture must be taken to embrace a major part of Rajputana. Historically also the Shrimals and the Porwad Vanias or the Vaishyas who play such a leading role in the commercial life of Gujarat migrated from the well-known historical places of Shrimāl and Prāgvāta. Their close affinity with the fighting clans of the Rajputs is further corroborated by the shining exploits of the rulers and their ministers who have left such enduring monuments of their valour, generosity and good taste. It is also important to note that the two principal creeds of modern Gujarat find some of their most sacred places of pilgrimage in the very heart of Rajputana, Shri Nāthdwāra for the Vaishnavas and Shri Kesariyaji for the Jains in the Udaipur State. The linguistic affinities as well as the qualities of enterprise, frugality, high-minded charity and piety of the peoples of Rajputana and Gujarat are well known.

The Gujarati school of painting should, therefore, be understood as embracing not only what is known as Gujarat at present but also the major portion of Rajasthan, at any rate up to the end of the seventeenth century when the provincial Courts of Rajputana came to be greatly influenced by the current idiom of the Mughal atelier.)

Hitherto the pictorial material representative of the Gujarati school of painting has been, barring the richly illuminated and illustrated Kalpasūtras and Kālkāchārya Kathānkam, limited. Vasanta Vilās had



79 pictures on cloth, the largest being 5.7" by 7.6". A number of Vaishnava and other manuscripts have been recently studied especially by Dr. M. R. Majmudar including the *Gītagovinda*, *Bālagopāla Stuti*, *Devī Mahātmya*, *Rati Rahasya*, and some later pictures of *Shrīmad Bhāgavata* dated 1610 A. D. The *Gītagovinda* studied by him refers to six out of the ten avatārs of Kṛṣṇa with an introductory one for Śārādā. Other early manuscripts of the *Gītagovinda* have been published by Stella Kramrisch in the December 1934 number of the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*. The manuscript that I propose to discuss is perhaps one of the earliest and the most elaborately illustrated version of the *Gītagovinda*, and of probably the early sixteenth century. The manuscript is in a fair state of preservation and has 159 folios with four missing. The size of the folio is  $12\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7".

As pointed out by Majmudar, the popularity of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* in Western India within less than 200 years of Jayadeva's demise is remarkable. Apparently the *Gītagovinda* heralded the growing tide of Vaishnavism which was to dominate the popular and religious life of the people throughout Hindusthan almost right up to the end of the 17th century. The *Gītagovinda* apparently became a favourite composition not only with the connoisseurs of Sanskrit and the Vaishnava devotees but also with the illuminators and illustrators right to the end of the 18th and even in the beginning of the 19th century. I have seen stray pages of the *Gītagovinda* painted in the Mughal style in the collection of Sir Cowasji Jehangir in Bombay belonging obviously to the time of Akbar. There is a magnificent version of the *Gītagovinda* with the Tehri Darbar, examples of which were reproduced in my book "Studies in Indian Painting". Another very remarkable version is the one painted by Manaku in the Basoli style and exhibited in the Lahore Museum. This particular version has raised several intriguing questions. The authorship of the paintings is claimed by Manaku, a woman painter, who claims to have produced the illustrated edition in the year 1787 Samvat or 1730 A. D. The verse is illuminated in gold and forms an integral part of the opening picture of the *Gītagovinda*. It is a pity that the beautiful pictures of Manaku have not yet been adequately reproduced or won a widespread popularity, as they deserve.



I have seen other versions of the *Gitagovinda* in the later and highly ornate Rajasthani style but none of these pictures rival those in the collections of the Tehri Darbar and the Lahore Museum. A very brilliant series of *Gitagovinda* pictures executed by a local school of artists working at Kishengarh, near Jaipur, has recently been discovered by Principal Dickinson of Lahore. Some of these pictures are dated as late as 1840, and are ascribed to individual artists. These pictures doubtless belong to the parent stock of the Rajasthani painters working in Jaipur. What is noteworthy, however, is the maintenance of a high aesthetic standard even till about the middle of the 19th century.

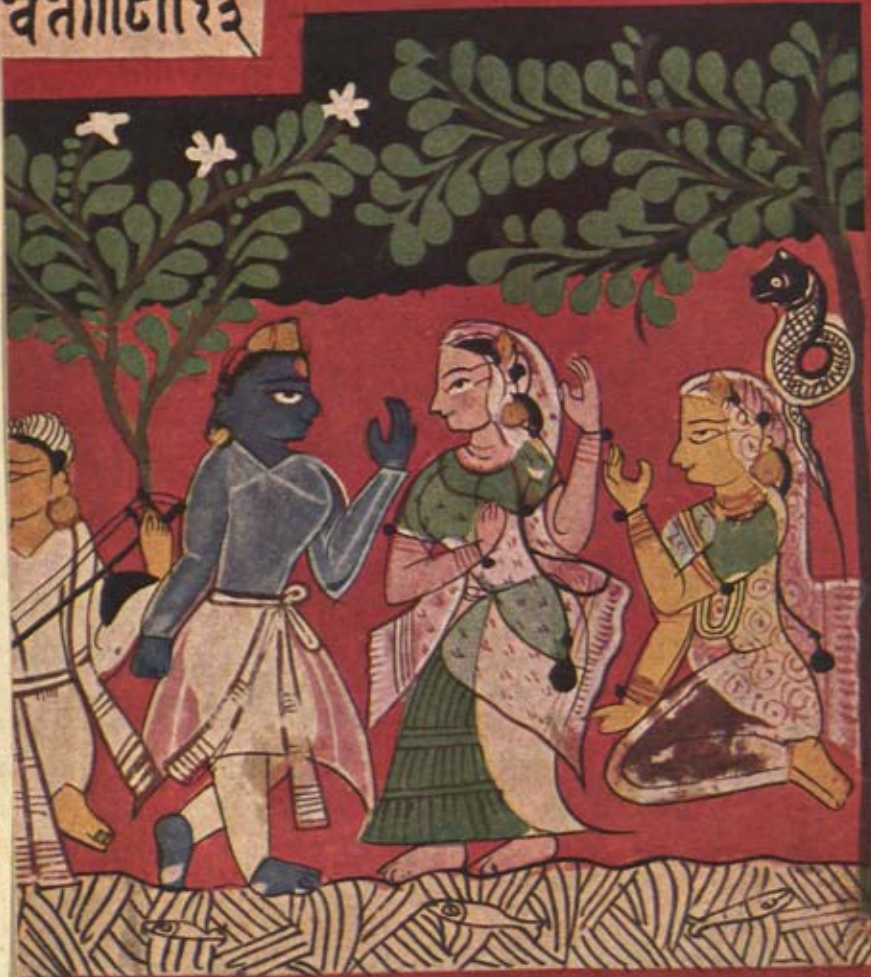
The manuscript that I have recently acquired is probably the most profusely illustrated document of Gujarati painting and is interesting in a variety of ways. The illustrations enclosed in a rectangle of red lines cover the entire page with the relevant Sanskrit text inscribed at the top. Only one side of the folio is used and the paper while it has stood the test of time, is not of the same superlative quality as one often comes across in respect of Mughal paintings. The writing, as will be seen from one of the reproductions given here, is good and perhaps above the average of most Sanskrit manuscripts of the period. But here again it cannot compare with either the quality or the care devoted to the writing of Persian manuscripts of the Mughal court.

In style and in the quality of the pictures, the manuscript is remarkable. The drawing is swift, precise and vital, and the artist moves from one incident to another with a sense of confidence and sure improvisation. The figures are more alive than in any of the known examples of Gujarati painting. The colouring is brilliant, warm and striking, though the palette is limited chiefly to the use of reds, blues, whites and greens. There is no attempt at subtle combinations or producing an impression of impeccable or ingenious craftsmanship. The pictures have an atmosphere of intimacy, and the studied simplicity both of line and colour would appear to be understood equally well by the artist and his audience. Almost every picture would have made a magnificent mural. It is as if the art of the wall painter had been abridged into the folios of a manuscript.

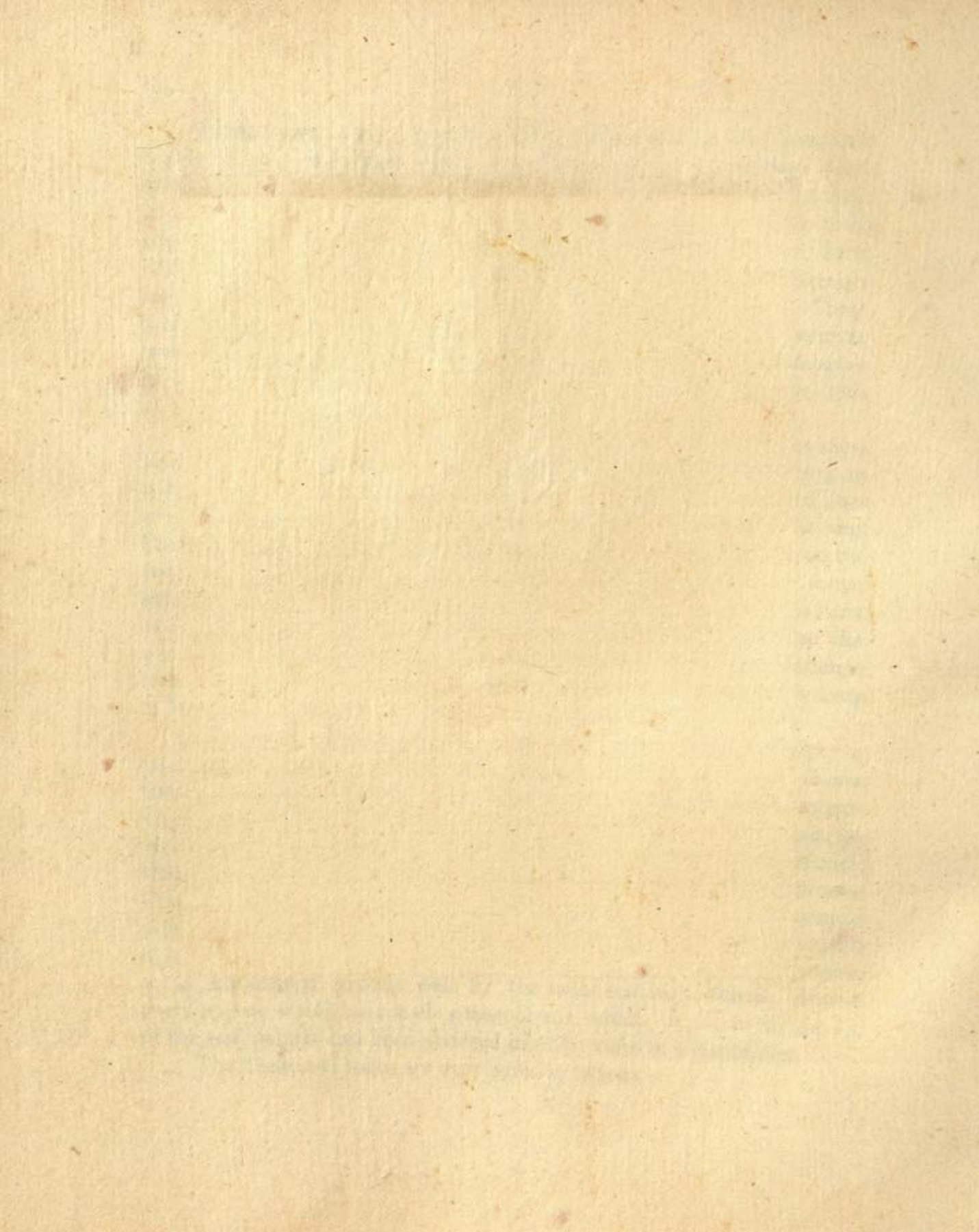
The illustrated folios are distributed as follows :



जयदेवकविभारतीवसत्रुदिसुवतिरि  
वती॥८॥१३









Cantos.	Folios.
I.	1-40
II.	41-51
III.	52-58
IV.	59-70
V.	71-84
VI.	85-89
VII.	90-110
VIII.	111-115
IX.	116-119
X.	120-128
XI.	129-141
XII.	142-163

The scene is laid on the banks of the Jumna, but it is not the Jumna of the Pahari painter—rushing down from its mountainous retreats and whirling in swift turns through scenes of verdant glory. The Jumna as seen by the Gujarati painter is but a placid stream winding through the Braj Mandal and all that he could conjure up in his vision—a stream replete with fish and branching trees (probably 'kadamba') on its banks. There are none of the magnificent trees, the brilliant creepers or the flowering plants which the Pahari painter associated with its precipitous descent across the Himalayas.]

As usual in pictures of this particular school, the size of the painted object is primarily the function of its importance and not of relative or spatial proportions. For example, a bee or a bird may be painted unusually large because the artist intends to emphasize its prominence. In other words, the whole object of illustrated manuscripts like the *Gītagovinda* was to give a racy, colourful and easily understandable version of the popular poem. Just as, for instance, the heroes of the 'Cochin Murals', a sumptuous publication by the Cochin Government (1940) illustrating the *Rāmāyaṇa* and of others in the Padmanābhapuram Palace in the Travancore State illustrating the incidents from the *Dashāvatāra*, the ten incarnations and the *Mahābhārata* are dressed up in the costumes of the Kathakali dancers, the characters in these early manuscripts of the Gujarati school would look as if they were a part of the popular pictorial show—the



'bhavai' or the 'swang' which the people were used to see on the appropriate festivals.

The 'dramatis personae' are generally outline in red, while the entire landscape of trees and creepers along with the humming bees and the chattering birds are depicted with the brush—a rather uncommon and unusual departure in Indian manuscript or miniature paintings. Colour is literally thrown in and quite frequently overflows the limits of the encompassing lines.

It is unnecessary to repeat the characteristic features of the Gujarati school. It will suffice to draw attention to some special features of this particular Ms. The main interest centres on the treatment of the figures. There is no attempt at making the figures "speak". The emphasis is almost wholly on gestures and movements. The facial expression is generally the same, but it is remarkable how the artist has been able to make his figures live by concentrating on simple gestures and significant poses. Kāmadeva, Cupid, figures quite prominently and is generally shown standing on one foot and shooting the flower-edged dart of desire. Dancing postures seem to be favoured.

Jayadeva, the author of the Gītagovinda, with his stringed 'ekatāra', or 'vīṇā' is depicted in a number of panels attired in 'dhotī, dupaṭṭā' and a cap. It is not a portrait but merely the conventional depiction of the author in a mood of humility and in accord with the ancient tradition. The landscape of conventional trees with broad leaves and spreading branches, humming bees and clamorous birds, furnishes the background for the romantic 'sortie' of Rādhā and Krishna, when the sky was overcast, the night was dark and young Krishna was afraid of walking to his home across the Jumna. The bee and the cuckoo ('kokila') are naturally prominent as the heralds of spring. The emphasis, however, is on the movements of the principal actors in the poem.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature about the background of all these Gīta-govinda pictures is the way in which trees dominate the scene. The trees are, of course, conventional, and the only identification that is possible is perhaps that of the palm and of the 'kadamba'. It is the latter with its pink blossoms, hovering bees and low, trailing branches, which furnishes the poetic background to the various episodes of Jayadeva's



poem. The various characters are outlined against a background generally of pink and green, and sometimes also of light blue, grey and yellow. It should not be forgotten that the scene of the poem is on the banks of the Jumna, and in the groves of Brindaban. The tree often occupies the centre of the picture, and its overspreading branches furnish the canopy of green foliage with humming bees and clamorous birds. The peacock is quite frequently painted in its fully glory; and the bees are almost as prominent as the blossoms. Sometimes the bees form a vital part of the pictorial pattern, as is also the case with the peacock with its magnificent train of feathers resting on the overhanging branches. The entire treatment of the landscape is unusual and original, and it is not possible to trace its origin in any other school of painting yet known; nor is it yet possible to see the exact continuance of these mannerisms in the subsequent periods of Indian painting, except perhaps in the pictures of the Tehri-Garhwal and Basoli Gītagovinda. The entire treatment seems to conform to a conventional and yet informal pattern, and there can be no doubt as to its effectiveness from the pictorial point of view. The foliage is vividly picked out against a monochrome background of yellow, red, or grey as the case may be. The entire pattern is indeed that of the sacred grove of Brindaban alive with the sports of Rādhā and Krishna, where even trees and birds seem to be animated by the breath of Spring.]

One of the striking things about these various pictures is the information that is available regarding the costumes of the people in the epoch just preceding the advent of the Mughals. The diaphanous 'jāmā' or the 'āṅgarkhā' with deep angular slits at the ends as also the transparent scarf of the 'chunri' of the ladies are perhaps the most peculiar. This particular type of 'āṅgarkhā' is found in some of the earlier pictures of the Court of Akbar, particularly in respect of the portraits of Hindu personages. It would appear, however, that this type of 'āṅgarkhā' was the prevailing dress of the Hindu gentry, at any rate in Rajputana and that it was adopted with modifications at the new Imperial Court of Agra and Delhi. The ordinary 'deśī' shoe is also to be seen as well as the 'topī,' apart from the 'kamarband' or the waist-band so characteristic in the delineation of the grandees of the Mughal Court at a later period and



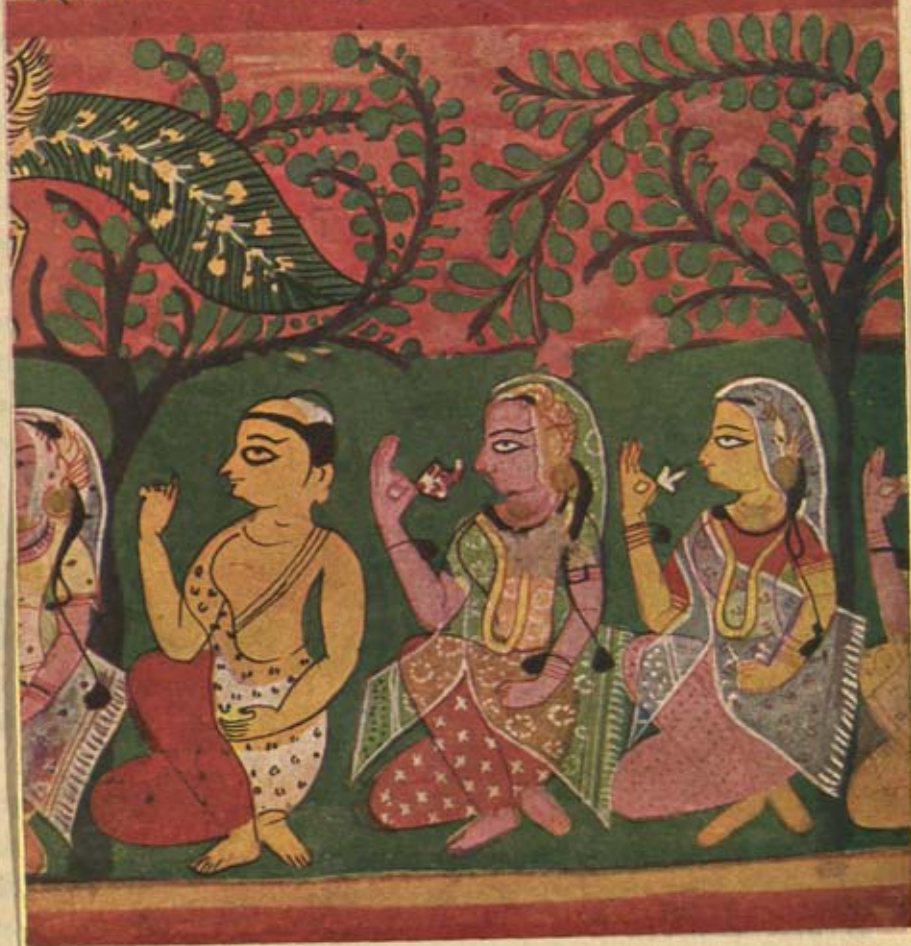
still in use in Rajputana. The peaked cap—the prevalent headgear in the pictures of Vasanta Vilās—was probably something of the nature of a 'topi' or a 'mukuta'. The word 'topikā' was used in a work of the 12th century called 'Abhilashitārtha Chintāmaṇi' and was particularly commended for monsoon wear. Kāmādeva is generally attired in 'dhoti' and cap. The masculine beard as well as long coiffure seem to have got out of fashion since the days of Vasanta Vilās. Women folk, on the other hand, cover their heads with the ends of the 'chunri,' tie their hair in a free dangling knot and carry the black wrist band (maṅgala-sūtra) as a safeguard against the 'evil eye' which is not generally found after the end of the 16th century, but is quite characteristic of the paintings of the Court of Akbar. The custom of putting the auspicious mark on the forehead seems to be just coming into fashion. Judging in fact from the costumes worn by the women, one would be inclined to think that the manuscript was really painted at one of the Vaishnava centres in Rajputana such as Nāthdwāra, for the dress of the women is almost like that of the Marwari lady of the present day. The big round ear-rings are also there and appear to have been the weakness of the Gujaratis as alleged by a writer of the 10th century A. D.

Both men and women seem to prefer coloured cloths with check and floral designs and the men are not averse to combining a diaphanous 'aṅgarkhā' with coloured or even striped or patterned pyjamas. The 'dupaṭṭā' or long scarf thrown round the neck gives a certain amount of scope to the artist to impart movement to his masculine figures, as also the angular ends of the 'aṅgarkhā' and of the headgear, the 'sāfā' or the turban.

The headgear of Krishna as well as Kāmādeva affords a great deal of variety. Kāmādeva is sometimes wearing a turban with the upper end or tassel prominently standing out; while Krishna carries flowers, almost in the fashion of the Scotchman, in his peaked cap. What is, however, specially noteworthy is the holding of a flower in the right hand, a mannerism quite common during the Mughal period. As a matter of fact, there are some very curious features in these pictures, which are reminiscent of the habits of the Mughal Court. It will suffice to mention the angular 'aṅgarkhās,' ornate and elaborate sashes tied round the



श्रीजयदेवस्तौ सुधी तपीतां बरोना भवदा रश  
 ॥ श्रीरस्तु ॥ ॥ श्रुतं नवतु ॥ ॥ श्र









waist, and the variety of the pyjamas. The feminine garment has not yet developed into a modern 'sari'; it is still a loose scarf flung overhead with ends loosely hanging on either side. Even the scart or the 'chunri' has not developed in the conceits of the later period; it is almost a utility garment—loose and baggy and generally in monochrome. It must not be forgotten in this connection that these peculiarities in the details of the costume must not be given too much importance in the matter of dating the pictures, for it is well-known that the habits and fashions in a country of India's continental dimensions change but slowly, and what is even more important is that the fashions of a by-gone age are bound to be found lingering almost in their original, pristine form in isolated localities. One only has to compare the difference in vogues and fashions obtaining in India of today—in the bigger urban centres with those prevailing in some of the inaccessible States in the Himalayan hills and in the plains of Rajputana. In other words, anachronisms in fashion or merely archaic costumes do not indicate an earlier origin in time.

The dating of the *Gītagovinda* is not wholly free from difficulties. The epigraphical evidence of the top 'mātrās' is not conclusive for ascribing the manuscript to a later period. The style of the paintings is primitive, brilliant and virile and would, 'prima facie,' indicate an earlier origin than the 15th or the 16th centuries and this would not be rebutted merely by the presence of the angular and diaphanous 'aṅgarkhā', the waist band and the flowing 'dupaṭṭās' or the coloured trousers, for it is well known that the pyjamas or breeches at any rate, are as old as the 1st century A. D. The famous statue of Kanishka for instance of the 1st century A. D. shows the great ruler clad in what would be now called breeches and top boots and a long coat. The predominance of the 'aṅgarkhā' and the trousers may be explained by the fact that Jayadeva's poem was acted and painted as a 'yātrā' or a 'bhavai' in which the male characters, at any rate, were dressed like those of the princely order. I would imagine that even in the bygone days there was a differentiation in the costume of the common folk as distinguished from that of the higher classes, just as at present. The latter probably wore the 'aṅgarkhā' and the pyjamas while the rest patronised the 'dhotī.' In some ways the pictures of the *Vasanta-Vilās* as well as of contemporary Jaina manuscripts look to me to be more



sophisticated, the drawing and colouring more accomplished and deliberate than the pictures of the present manuscript. But mere crudity of execution is quite often a sign of indifferent workmanship or sheer deterioration as, for instance, in the Jodhpur Bhāgavata painted by Govinda in 1610 A. D. The technique of the Gītagovinda pictures is doubtless old and more akin to that of fresco painting than almost any other Gujarati painting that I have seen ; and all I would like to affirm is that the manuscript cannot be later than the 1st quarter of the 16th century. How much earlier it is, it is not possible to say with any degree of accuracy.

My friend Mr. O. C. Gangoly has a feeling that the pictures of the manuscript may "belong to the earlier phase—revealing the style in the making rather than later compositions". I have learnt to be somewhat cautious in the matter of dating Indian paintings as well as sculptures. A Rāginī series, for instance, with all the characteristic marks of the period of Akbar is by a definite inscription a hundred years later, and it is well known that the style of the Jaina manuscripts remains constant over a period of 2-3 centuries. On examination of the existing material I would be content to date this particular manuscript between the later part of the 15th and the early years of the 16th century.

The significance of the ends of the scarf or 'sari' being drawn over the head should also not be lost sight of. This is doubtless a later development and would point, therefore, to the Gītagovinda being subsequent to the Vasanta Vilās. It is known that the 'sari' as known now came into vogue early in the 16th century.

[The bourgeois art of Gujarati manuscript painting seems to have retained its individuality till about the end of the 16th century and though it continued to produce richly illustrated documents, its native characteristics were submerged in the new idiom of the Rajasthani and the Pahari schools which continued to exist vigorously till almost the first quarter of the 19th century.] From a purely pictorial point of view the present manuscript constitutes a valuable, racy, and even elegant interpretation of Jayadeva's masterpiece, which it should not be forgotten, was composed at a time when the emphasis on erotics seems to have been greater in the art of the country than either before or after.

Recently I have come across some further interesting material



bearing on the development of Gujarati painting, thanks chiefly to the courtesy of my old friend, Muni Jina Vijayaji—the director of the Bhāratiya Vidyā Bhavan at Bombay, and that famous bibliophile and scholar, Muni Punyavijayaji Maharaj. The material consists chiefly of manuscripts illustrating the story of 'Mādhavānala', 'Bilva Maṅgala' and 'Chaura Pañchāshikā' as well as some very beautiful 'Vijñapti-patras' or letters written by the Jaina laity. A very interesting wooden panel depicting an important historical disputation between the two sects of Jainism has also been found. This may perhaps belong to the reign of Siddharāja Jayasīṃha and has been carefully described by Muni Jina Vijayaji in a recent publication of the Bhāratiya Vidyā Bhavan. The new material is valuable on account of its rarity and also because of its unusual aesthetic qualities. Incidentally it appears that the desert kingdom of Cutch has had some artistic traditions in the past, though at present it is distinguished only by its outmoded currency of sea shells or 'cowries,' and the almost defunct textile work of exquisite pattern and some rather beautiful traditional silverware. The new material and particularly the variety of subjects depicted make it clear beyond doubt that the Gujarati school had a wide geographical extension and considerable and justifiable vogue in the days of its glory, and that the evolution of Rajasthani as well as the Panjab Schools of painting, including the Basoli pictures as well as the purely Mughal school is vitally connected with the older traditions of Gujarati painting, the origins of which may have to be traced to a much earlier epoch, for some of the characteristic features such as the pointed nose and the long drawn out eyes—in fact the entire treatment of the human face in the Gujarati school seems to find its prototypes in some extraordinary pieces of metallic cult images, which I have recently acquired. These images go back to an era when modelling or the casting of images was unknown, when iconography was a matter primarily of symbolism and when man had only recently acquired the capacity to work or more literally hammer his thoughts and ideals into pieces of brass<sup>1</sup>.

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1. The substance of this article is published in the 'Journal of the Gujarat Research Society', October 1945, and I am indebted to the secretary for permission to make use of some of the materials published therein.



## PLATES

## Pl. I. Fol. 110.

In the verses on this page, the end of the seventh canto of the *Gīta-govinda*, Rādhā says :

"The company of the playmates looks like the enemy, the cool breeze seems like fire, the rays of the moon like poison when He (Krishna) is in my mind. Even though, my heart is running towards him who is without mercy. The love of girls whose eyes are beautiful like lotuses will always act against them ;—he is uncontrollable.

O cool breeze from the Malaya mountains torment me ! O Holder of Five arrows [ Kāma ], take away my life ! I will not return home.

O sister of Yama [ Yamunā as the sister of Yama, Death ] with thy waves sprinkle my body with calm, let its heat subside. [ O Krishna ] what do you care ?"

## Pl. II.

Part of Picture 93 of the Ms. Krishna carries a 'dupaṭṭā', and also wears a waist-band with long flowing tassels. On the extreme right, just over the head of the woman seated on her haunches is shown a cobra-like figure, the exact significance of which I am unable to understand.

Here is the substance of the text : ( Rādhā says ) "My Master does not even think of me though I am pining amongst the reeds of the Jamuna."

The verses on the right are in the form of a benediction : "May the beautiful and charming phrases of Jayadeva, who has sought refuge at the feet of the Master dwell in the heart ( of the reader ) as the memory of the beloved."

## Pl. III.

This is part of the last picture—No. 163—of the Ms. A peacock at the centre, perched on the curving branches, is an important feature of the picture. There is an atmosphere of peace and quiet. On the extreme right is a gentleman, dressed in white, and seated in front of a tripod—a symbol sacred to Jainism, and known as 'sthāpanāchārya'. The tripod bears the inscription Śrī Ramakrishna. It would appear as if the gentleman and the two ladies seated opposite to him might well represent the patrons, who were perhaps responsible for ordering an illustrated copy of Jayadeva's *Gīta-govinda*. There is a sense of repose about the entire picture. The person with the bare shoulders is perhaps the family priest, while the three feminine figures on the right may represent the rest of the household. Each one of these three women carries a blossom in a characteristic posture. The flowing braids of hair and the 'maṅgala-sūtra', the black woollen thread round the wrists, have been woven into a pleasing pattern, while the diaphanous scarfs have been daintily thrown over the head. The peacock throughout the *Gīta-govinda* pictures is treated as an important part of the pictorial pattern, and like the bee hovering over the spring blossoms is as much an integral part of the landscape as the shady trees with long and spreading branches. The group of the three women, each carrying a blossom, is reproduced here.

A careful study of the costumes seen in the various pictures of the Ms. suggests a substantially later date than that of 'Vasanta Vilās' and it is just possible that the Ms. was almost contemporary with the earliest paintings of the 16th century. It should not be forgotten that we have not had hitherto any reliable data of the state of painting during the time of Babar and Humayun, let alone the Courts of the earlier Muslim rulers, though there can be but little doubt that these Courts also gave patronage to painters and calligraphists.



## **AN IMAGE OF ĀRYA AVALOKITESVARA OF THE TIME OF VAINYAGUPTA**

by **AJIT GHOSE**

The Museum of the Vaṅgiya Sahitya Pariṣad was enriched during the period when I was Hon. Superintendent (1926-1930) by the gift of a unique Buddhist sculpture in sandstone of considerable artistic merit and great archæological and iconographic importance. It was found at the bottom of a dried-up tank at Salar, which is in the district of Murshidabad and is a site of undoubted antiquity, where ancient beads and cast coins have been found. For more than one reason this sculpture may be claimed to be unique. It is the only sculpture found in Bengal that I know of, which shows an image in the round facing both ways, for the obverse and reverse are counterparts. Iconographically also the image is unique. The interest and importance of this sculpture are heightened by its early date. Gupta sculptures are of the greatest rarity in Bengal and our sculpture is one of the earliest, if not the earliest. The maximum length of the image, which is broken away just below the knees, one leg being shorter than the other, is 24", while the breadth at the widest part is 18". In its outline, the sculpture was evidently oval but just below the feet there may have been a pedestal; anyway, it must have been so fixed that it could be seen from both front and back. It was thus like the two-faced Janus of old Rome, but the significance of the image was quite different. That side in which the divinity is represented as standing in 'tribhaṅga' pose, holding a lotus stalk in the left hand, while the right arm is akimbo with the palm resting on the hip, must be considered to be the front. The hair is dressed in a topknot. The face has a gentle smile of compassion and the eyes look downward. This and the general configuration and treatment of the body suggest



that the image belongs to the early Gupta period. The upper part of the body is bare, while the lower is covered by a short 'dhoti' reaching to the knees and tied round the waist. There is a belt-like girdle below the hand which rests on the hip. The figure with its clean-cut outline stands out from the stone, which is cut away at both the right and the left sides of it to a considerable depth so that the image is seen in front of the oval halo. The only ornaments are a large ear-ring and a necklace of beads. As I have stated above, the figure on the reverse is the counterpart of the one on the obverse, but it is not so well preserved. On both sides, the deity seems to stand against a large oval surface which has a corrugated appearance, as if it were one mass of rays but ending in clean cut bars, separated from each other and joined to an outer oval rim, the whole having the appearance of an oval-shaped halo (Pl. IV and p. 54).

At first sight one would identify the image as Padmapāṇi Bodhisattva who, as we know, could be represented in any form or attitude. The seal on the Mallasārul copper plate inscription of Vijaysena, which is also in the Museum of the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, has on it in relief a representation of a standing figure with the right hand raised above the shoulder. Except as regards the pose of the right hand, the figure appears to be similar to our sculpture. Behind the figure there is what looks like an oval frame with innumerable rays issuing from a central ring. If the artist had been conversant with perspective, this might have been described as a 'chakra' in perspective. N. G. Majumdar was the first to decipher the whole inscription and to publish it in the Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā<sup>1</sup> and in *Epigraphia Indica*<sup>2</sup>.

This copper plate was discovered at Mallasārul, a village on the banks of the river Damodar in Burdwan district. It purports to be a grant of land by Mahārāja Vijaysena, a vassal of Mahārājādhirāj Gopa Chandra, and is dated in the year 3, apparently of the latter's reign. Vijaysena is evidently the same person who is described as Mahārāj Mahāsāmanta Vijaysena in the Gunaighar copper-plate inscription of

1. 'Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā', 1944 B. S., No 1. pp. 17-21.

2. 'Epigraphia Indica', XXIII p. 159 ff. See also Sircar, D. C., 'Select Inscriptions', Vol. 1, pp. 259-264.



Mahārāja Vainyagupta, dated in the year 188 of the Gupta Era, which corresponds to 506-7 A. D. Majumdar inferred that Vijaysena must have been a Sāmanta successively of Vainyagupta and Gopachandra between the latter part of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth. The script of the Mallasārul copper-plate inscription is also the Northern Brāhmī of the first half of the sixth century A. D.

The Gunaighar grant of Vainyagupta, referred to above, mentions a grant of land to the Avaivarttika Saṅgha of the Buddhist Mahāyāna sect. The monastery of this Saṅgha was founded by Śāntideva as the Ārya-Avalokiteśvara Āśrama Vihāra, after the deity for whose worshippers it had been built, and it had been dedicated by a person of the name of Rudradatta. This inscription establishes the fact that Buddhism was in the early sixth century a flourishing religion in these parts for, besides the monastery above referred to, two others are mentioned, one of which is styled 'Rājavihāra', evidently because it received royal patronage, although it appears from the inscription itself that Vainyagupta was himself a devotee of Śiva. The importance of the inscription for us lies in the mention of the image of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara. We have seen that our sculpture and the image on the seal of the Mallasārul copper-plate of Vijaysena are very similar; we have seen, too, that Vijaysena was a vassal of Vainyagupta and that the latter made a grant of land in his Gunaighar copper-plate to an Āśrama Vihāra dedicated to Ārya-Avalokiteśvara. The question that occurred to me was: Could it be that it was the Ārya-Avalokiteśvara to whom a grant of land had been made by Vainyagupta, that was adopted as the symbol on the seal of Vainyagupta's vassal, the Mahāsāmanta Vijaysena and this seal continued to be used by the latter even when Mahārājādhirāj Gopachandra became his overlord? Majumdar thought that the deity on the seal was probably Lokenāth: "The seal bears in relief a standing figure of a two-armed deity (Lokenāth?) with a 'chakra' in the background, representing perhaps the wheel of the Law." The query mark shows that Majumdar was not satisfied with the identification. We venture to suggest what appears to us to be the correct identification of the deity on the seal as well as on the sculpture and this identification explains satisfactorily what was thought to be a 'chakra' in the background. What had appeared



to Majumdar and others like the spokes of a wheel seemed to me to be intended to represent rays emanating from the body of a deity; incidentally the elliptical shape did not stand in the way of such an explanation. Dr. B. M. Barua on being consulted, strongly supported my view. He cited passages from the *Digha Nikāya*<sup>1</sup> and the *Anupatika Sūtra*,<sup>2</sup> the latter of which refers to "rays emanating like the rays of the sun." No doubt other passages may be cited which refer to rays emanating from the Buddha. One such I found in R. L. Mitra's '*Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*', where "golden rays issuing from the glorious person of the Buddha" are mentioned as occurring in the Nepalese manuscript '*Ratnamālā Avadāna*'.<sup>3</sup> The question that suggested itself to me was: Was the purpose of the double image facing in opposite directions to convey the idea that the Bodhisattva illumines the four quarters with the lustre of rays which emanate from his body? My surprise was great when I discovered in R. L. Mitra's book just what I was searching for, namely a description of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara and this seemed exactly to fit in with our sculpture and the image on the seal. The '*Guṇakāraṇḍa-Vyūha*',<sup>4</sup> a Nepalese manuscript which was translated into Chinese, describes the character, religious teachings and miracles of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara, a Bodhisattva, who was called Saṅgha-ratna or the 'jewel of the Buddhist Church'. We are told in this manuscript how Upagupta gave to Aśoka an account of 'Saṅgha-ratna' as follows, to quote the words of Dr. Rajendralala Mitra: "Once on a time Lord Buddha performed an ecstatic meditation, named 'sarvasaṃśodhana' or the "purifier of everything." No sooner he sat in that posture than golden rays illuminating the whole province were seen proceeding from some unknown region to that place. Suvarṇavarāṇa Viśkāmbhī, a saint, struck with wonder at this miracle, asked the Lord, whence did the rays proceed? The Lord said "from Ārya-Avalokiteśvara, who, by the command of Jina, is now preaching the doctrine of Nirvāṇa at Avīchī, the Stygian lake of fire. These rays,

1. '*Digha Nikāya*', Vol. II, p. 18.

2. '*Anupatika Sūtra*', p. 16, Pt. I (Dr. Ernst Leumann).

3. Mitra, R. L. '*Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*', p. 195.

4. Ibid. p. 96.











after having purified the wretched people of that hell, are come here to enlighten the ignorant and sinful." The above passage not only confirms our identification of the image as Ārya-Avalokiteśvara, but makes it quite clear that what had been supposed by Majumdar to be the 'dharmachakra' on the seal are really rays of light emanating from the person of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara, who enlightens the ignorant and sinful.

I cannot conclude better than by giving here a summary of the chain of reasoning by which we have established the identity of our sculpture. The stone image is the same as that on the seal of the Mallasārul inscription of Vijaysena. The latter was a vassal of Vainyagupta and Vainyagupta's Gunaighar inscription mentions the deity Ārya-Avalokiteśvara. A description of Ārya Avalokiteśvara shows that rays emanated from him. This description tallies with the figure on the seal and with the stone image, which is the subject-matter of this paper. Therefore the probabilities are in favour of this being an image of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara. As Vainyagupta's inscription mentions this deity, which, again, figures on the seal of his vassal Vijaysena, the worship of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara must have been popular at the time and as the sculpture, too, is of quite early date, its ascription to the time of Vainyagupta seems to be warranted, although there is a possibility that the image is earlier even. The identification with Lokenāth appears very like : "when in doubt say Lokenāth", and it does not explain the rays. As to why the rays are not shown in the sculpture by radiating lines as in the seal, the reason probably is that the sculptor understood perfectly the nature of his material and that such a course would not have given adequate support to the central figure ; the method adopted by him does lend such support and moreover adds an artistic effect to the spiritual beauty of his work.

So far as I am aware no similar image to ours has been published or noticed anywhere. Neither Bhattacharya's 'Buddhist Iconography' nor Bhattacharya's book describes Ārya-Avalokiteśvara. The official archæological reports furnish no parallel to our image. Grünwedel in his work on the mythology of Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia<sup>1</sup> mentions Āryāvalokiteśvara but only as another name of Avalokiteśvara. Getty<sup>2</sup> describes

1. Grünwedel, A., (French trans.) 'Mythologie du Bouddhisme au Tibet et en Mongolie', p. 130.

2. Getty, A., 'Gods of Northern Buddhism', 2nd ed., pp. 67-68.



an Āryāvalokiteśvara with many heads and hands but this does not help us in any way. The Sādhana Prakaraṇa of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara is given in the Sādhanamālā<sup>1</sup> to which reference should be made. The deity is of white complexion, wearing a 'jaṭāmukuta' and bedecked in jewels, but the important points in the description for us are that the deity is described as "amitābhakṛt śekharam" and his right hand is in 'varada mudrā,' while the left holds a lotus. It has been said that Avalokiteśvara could be represented in any form or pose and the same must be true of Ārya-Avalokiteśvara, for he is but a manifestation of the same deity. This explains the slight variations in the figures on the seal and the sculpture and that described in the Sādhanamālā text.



1. 'Sādhanamālā', Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 1925, Vol. I, p. 46. Thanks are due to Sir Anantalal Thakur, M. A. who kindly supplied me with the relevant text at Dr. Barua's instance.



# HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

by JITENDRA NATH BANERJEA

## I

### VIṢṆU

Far-reaching changes were introduced in the religious outlook of the Indians in the centuries preceding the Christian era. These were mainly concerned with the formation of various cults centering round man-gods like Vāsudeva, Buddha and Mahāvīra, or mythological divinities like Śiva, Umā and others. The general mass of Indians adopting one or other of these cults felt the need of concrete images of the deities of their respective creeds, and of temples ('devagrhas') in which they were to be enshrined. References to different structural shrines specially those associated with the Bhāgavata or Pāñcarātra cult are found in some pre-Christian inscriptions of the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., and a few inscriptions of the early post-Christian period. The Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus shows that such was the popularity of the Bhāgavata creed in the 2nd century B.C., that a Greek alien could become a convert to it and erect a votive Garuḍa column (Garuḍa-dhvaja) in honour of the god of his choice, Vāsudeva 'deva-deva' (the god of gods). Other fragmentary epigraphs of the Suṅga period found at the same place also refer to the construction of excellent palaces of the Bhagavat Vāsudeva ('bhagavato pāsādottama'). Several Nāgari inscriptions (really different replicas of the same record) allude to the construction of 'an enclosing wall round the stone (object) of worship, called Nārāyaṇa-vāṭikā (compound) for the divinities Saṃkarṣaṇa-Vāsudeva by (the king) Sarvatāta.' Though no explicit mention of the images of the gods is made in the above records, there is little doubt that it was the images that were enshrined. The Mora well inscription of the time of Swami Mahākṣatrapa Sodasa (early part of the 1st century A.D.)



makes a clear mention of the enshrinement of the images of the five holy Vṛṣṇi-vīras in a stone shrine. The images are described as 'five objects of adoration made of stone radiant, as it were, with highest beauty'....( 'ārcādeśam śailam pañca jvalata iva paramavapuṣā' ). These holy ( 'bhagavat' ) Pañca-vīras of the Vṛṣṇis have been identified by me with Saṃkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Sāmba and Aniruddha on the basis of a 'Vāyu Purāṇa' passage where they are described as 'gods originally human beings' or 'gods human in nature' ( 'manuṣya prakṛti devas' )<sup>1</sup>. Another fragmentary inscription from Mathura records the gift of a 'toraṇa', 'vedikā' ( railing ) and a third object ( probably 'devakula', temple ) in the Mahāsthāna ( a large sanctuary according to Lüders ) of Bhagavat Vāsudeva, during the time of the same Mahākṣatrapa. The evidence collected from the above epigraphic data fully proves the existence of shrines associated with the Bhāgavata cult in different parts of India in the centuries immediately before and after the Christian era.

Many Gupta inscriptions record the erection of temples in honour of the god Viṣṇu under various names such as Chakrabhṛt, Janārdana, Śārṅgin, Muradviṣ and others. The Udayagiri cave shrine (near Sanchi in central India) appears to have been a Vaiṣṇava one, for the inscription dated G. E. 82, recording the pious gift of one Sanakānika...dhala, a feudatory of Chandragupta II, is engraved on the upper part of a smoothed and counter sunk panel over two figures one being of the four-armed god Viṣṇu and the other of a twelve-armed goddess sculptured on its facade. The rock-cut inscription on a steep isolated hill near Tusam, in the Hissar district of the Punjab, palaeographically datable in the 4th or 5th century A. D., contains a reference to the construction of a reservoir and a house for the use of the god Viṣṇu by one Āchārya Somatrāta, the great grandson of Ārya-Sātvatayogāchārya Yaśastrāta; the wheel engraved about a foot below the last line of the inscription is evidently connected with it and is the wheel of Viṣṇu and not a Buddhist 'dharmacakra' or a mere sun-symbol as Fleet has suggested. A red sand-stone pillar, discovered at Bhitari, a village in Ghazipur, U. P., contains an undated inscription of the time of Skandagupta, recording the installation of an image of the same god under the name of Śārṅgin

1. For this identification, cf. 'J.I.S.O.A', Vol. X, pp. 65-8.



(‘Kācit pratimām tasya Śārṅgīnaḥ...bhagavato mūrttirīyaṃ yaścātra samsthitaḥ’). The Junagadh rock inscription of the time of the same ruler records the erection of a temple of the god Viṣṇu under the name of Cakrabhṛt by one Cakra-pālita, the governor of Surāṣṭra, under Skandagupta (‘Kāritamavakramatinā Cakrabhṛtaḥ Cakrapālitenā gṛham’) in the Gupta year 138. Mention is made of the construction of a temple of Viṣṇu by one Mayūrākṣaka, a minister of Viśvavarman (‘Viṣṇosthānamakārayadbhagavatasśrīmān-Mayūrākṣaka’), in the stone inscription found at Gangdhar, in the Jhalawad state, Central India, of the year 480 (Mālava reckoning, i.e. 402-03 A.D.). The Eran (Saugor dist. C. P.) stone pillar inscription of Budhagupta of the Gupta year 165 refers to the erection of a ‘dhvajastambha’ (a votive column—a flag staff) by one Mātṛviṣṇu and his brother, Dhanya-viṣṇu, in honour of the god Janārdhana, another name of Viṣṇu (‘bhagavataḥ puṇyajanārdhanasya Janārdhanasya dhvajastambhobhyucchṛtaḥ’). The Khoh (Nagod State, Central India) copperplate inscription of the Mahārāja Jayanātha of Ucchakalpa, dated in the year 177, records the grant of a village by the same Mahārāja to certain Brahmans, ‘for the purposes of a temple of the god Viṣṇu, under the name Bhagavat, established by them there’. Another Ucchakalpa king, viz. Mahārāja Sarvanātha granted a village named Āśramaka on the north bank of the river Tamasā, to certain persons for the purpose of repairs in a shrine of Viṣṇu (Bhagavat) as also in that of a god, ‘the name of which as written must be a mistake for Āditya, the sun’ (‘svapraṭiṣṭhāpitakabhagavatpādānāmāditsā-bhaṭṭārakapādānāñca khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa pratisaṃskāra-karaṇāya’). A ‘dhvaja’ (flag staff) of the god Viṣṇu was erected by one king Candra, ‘having fixed his mind upon Viṣṇu’, on a hill called Viṣṇupāda (‘Candrāhvena...bhūmipatinā Viṣṇau matim prāṇsur-viṣṇupāde girau bhagavato Viṣṇordhvajaḥ sthāpitaḥ’). Many other inscriptions of the above character can be mentioned which fully prove the great prevalence of the Vaiṣṇavic cult during the early and late Gupta period.<sup>1</sup> The Gupta emperors were devout Bhāgavatas by faith as we

1. For the above inscriptions, see Fleet, ‘Gupta Inscriptions’ pp. 22, 270, 53, 58, 74, 89, 121, 126, 140. For mention of other Vaiṣṇava shrines, cf. ‘ibid.’, pp. 158-9, 202 (‘bhavanottamaṃ kṣitibhujā Viṣṇoḥ kṛte .kāritam’), 222, 268 (‘Anantasvāmī-pādān pratiṣṭhāpya gandhadhūpa srag...sphūṭa-pratisaṃskāra-karaṇārtham bhagavacitrakūṭasvāmipādīya koṭṭhe’), etc.



know from their inscriptions and coin legends. The terracotta seals discovered at Bhiṭā and Basārī which have been noticed in the fifth chapter of my book on 'The Development of Hindu Iconography' establish the importance which this cult enjoyed throughout the Gupta period. In the subsequent religious history of India it never lost the ground which it had won for itself in the earlier times and due to various causes assumed such a position as to become one of the most accepted religious creeds of India.

In the developed form of this great sectarian religion, the principal deity was no doubt named Viṣṇu; but this god was not the same as the Vedic Viṣṇu. Though not one of the great gods in the Vedas,—it is only in five whole and one part hymns that his praises are sung and his name occurs only about 100 times in the 'R̥gveda' (thus, statistically he is a deity of the fourth rank),—still he enjoyed some importance in the early period. The feat mainly for which his praises are sung in the R̥g and the other Vedas is concerned with his having taken three steps or strides by which he traversed the whole of the universe ('R. V.', I, 22, 'A.V.', VII. 26, 4 etc.). This is further emphasised by the attributive epithets like 'urukrama, urugāyaḥ' (of the great strides), 'trivikrama' (three strides) etc., frequently applied to him. Thus, the hymnist sings, 'We praise the virility of Viṣṇu who is lord of all, the saviour, without any enemy, young and active; he, for saving the world, took three strides and thus widely traversed throughout the earthly spaces.'<sup>1</sup> Sākapuni and Aurnabhāva, two ancient interpreters of the Veda offer two different explanations of these three strides; the former 'interprets the three steps as the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe, thus the god being manifest in a three-fold form viz. as Agni on earth, as Indra or Vāyu in the atmosphere and as the sun in the heavens, while the latter holds that the three strides are the rising, culminating and setting of the sun.' These three steps later grew into a myth relating to the dwarf incarnation of the god (the

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1. R.V. I. 155, 4: 'Tattadidasya vaṁsyam gṛīmasīnasya trāturavṛkasya mīdhuṣaḥ | Ya pārthivāni tribhīrid-vigāmahirurukramiṣtorugāyā |' ivase'.



fifth one in the list of ten 'avatāras'). The idea of motion—swift, far extending regular motion—is constantly associated with him and at the same time his special character as the preserver, deliverer and the benevolent deity is already outlined in the Veda. But, what is of special importance here is that he is neither the principal solar deity nor a god of such importance in the Vedic period as many other Vedic gods such as Indra, Agni, Sūrya and others. In the period of the Brāhmaṇas, however, we find him enjoying a much more important position. Thus, in the 'Aitar-eya Brāhmaṇa' ( I, 1 ), he is described as the highest among the gods, while Agni is the lowest ( 'Agnirvai devānāmavamo Viṣṇurparamah' ); but the same 'Brāhmaṇa' ( I, 30 ) in quoting 'R. V.', I, 156, 4, where Viṣṇu accompanied by his friend ( Indra ) opens the stall states that he is the door-keeper of the gods ( 'devānām dvārapā' ). Yet there is no doubt about the gradual rise to importance of Viṣṇu in the late Vedic period, which was primarily due to his having been identified with the sacrifice; the 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa' ( XIV, 1, 1, ) narrates a myth of Viṣṇu, who as sacrifice, became the most eminent of the gods by first comprehending the issue of the sacrifice, and how his head was cut off by his bow starting asunder ( the bow-string was cut by the Aśvins assuming the shape of ants, as they were asked to do so by the other gods who became jealous of his power ) and how it became the sun. In the epic and purāṇic age, he is regarded as the most influential member of the later Brāhmaṇical triad, viz. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Still there is no doubt about the fact that in the period of the Brāhmaṇas he did not appear as the central figure in a cult pre-eminently theistic in character, which would require the construction of his images.

The rise to importance of Viṣṇu as a sectarian deity was due to his identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, the Sātvata hero who was at the root of the Bhakti cult that came to be designated afterwards as Vaiṣṇavism. This Kṣatriya chief who was in some way or other associated with the inauguration of a religious reform in ancient times—a reform not heterodox in character like those inaugurated by two other Kṣatriya heroes, Buddha Śākyamuni and Mahāvīra—was deified by his followers, after his death. Several relations of his, Saṃkarṣaṇa ( his elder brother ), Pradyumna ( his elder son ), and Aniruddha ( his grandson )



came also to be worshipped as secondary divinities, really so many emanations of him.<sup>1</sup> This pre-eminently theistic religion was at first described by such names as 'Pāñcarātra', 'Bhāgavata', 'Ekāntika' etc., and was not recognised at its earlier stages by the upholders of orthodox Vedism who believed in the efficacy of sacrifices entailing slaughter of animals. But the believers in the sacrificial system of religion thought it prudent to acknowledge the authenticity of this new creed and enlist the sympathy of the followers of the latter, when the rapid growth and development of the other heterodox systems was undermining their position. They accepted Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa as an 'avatāra' of their own Viṣṇu who was one of the Ādityas ; in the personality of the former, again, was merged the entity of one cosmic god, viz. Nārāyaṇa who appears in some late Vedic verses, Brāhmaṇas and early Smṛti works. To these three, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa elements, the consequence of whose amalgam was the great creed of Bhakti with all its outspreading and all-enfolding branches, has been added a fourth one, viz. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa element by R. G. Bhandarkar, which according to him was an indirect borrowal from Christianity. H. C. Ray Chaudhury, however, has shown that if the data at our disposal in support of the above view are critically analysed, the case for Christian influence on the myths current about the early life of Kṛṣṇa in the interpolated sections of the 'Mahābhārata,' its supplement 'Harivaṃśa' and such Purāṇas as the 'Bhāgavata' and others, appears to be very thin. Whatever might have been the truth as regards this, there can be no denying the fact that definite and conscious attempts in incorporating many other elements in the composite creed for its advantage are clearly recognisable in the mythologies that came to be associated with it. The very doctrine of incarnations, as will be shown afterwards, was handy in this respect and the founders of creeds, heretical from the Brāhmaṇical point of view, or their mythical predecessors were assumed by the myth-makers as so many 'avatāras' of the cult-god Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva ; Buddha and Rābha were

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1. The Mora Well inscription referred to above says that Śāmba, Vāsudeva's son by Jāmbavatī, was also an object of worship among the early Pāñcarātrins.



regarded as 'avatāras', though the doctrine of the former was branded as false and delusive,—it is said to have been preached by Viṣṇu in his avatārahood of Buddha for the destruction of the 'asuras' and other evil-minded persons. We cannot be sure about the respective periods when these multifarious elements were incorporated into the ever-expanding creed of Bhāgavatism, but there is no doubt that the three principal elements in it viz. Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa had already come to be associated together in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era. The two sets of epigraphic records, the Nāgari and Besnagar ones, are very important for the study of the early history of this sect. The column which was erected by the Bhāgavata Heliadora in honour of Devadeva Vāsudeva as recorded in the latter had a Garuḍa for its capital and is described as Garuḍadhvaja in the inscription; now, the Garuḍa was nothing but the sun conceived as a bird (cf. the Vedic epithet describing the sun as a bird, viz. 'Suparṇo garutmān'), and Viṣṇu is none other than the sun god himself in one of his aspects—in fact he is the best of all such.<sup>1</sup> The use of the word Nārāyaṇa, in the Nāgari inscriptions noticed above, in association with Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva is interesting for this shows that it had already been incorporated with the Vāsudeva-Saṃkarṣaṇa cult. R. P. Chanda's remarks in this connection are worth noting: 'Nārāyaṇavāṭa or the enclosure of Nārāyaṇa denotes the compound of a temple or place of worship of Nārāyaṇa. Pūjāśilāprākāra for Bhagavats Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva evidently denotes a smaller stone enclosure round either the images or other cult objects representing Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva within the Nārāyaṇavāṭa. As Vāsudeva was already identified with Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu the place presumably came to be known as Nārāyaṇavāṭa from the presence of the cult object representing Vāsudeva within it'.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Bhagavadgītā' which is probably to be dated in the 2nd century B. C. if not a little earlier, contains the evidence of the identity of

1. Cf. Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa describing himself in the 'Vibhūtiyoga adhyāya' of the 'Bhagavadgītā' as 'Ādityānāmaham Viṣṇu', X, 21.

2. 'M. A. S. I.', No. 5, P. 163.



Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu. In its 'Viśvarūpadarśanayoga' chapter, Arjuna addresses the lord Vāsudeva several times as Viṣṇu (cf. V. 24, 'Dhṛtiṃ na vindāmi śamaṃ ca Viṣṇo'; also 30—'bhāsastavogrā pratapanti Viṣṇo'). From this it appears that partial amalgamation of these three elements has already taken place sometime earlier than the 2nd century B. C. The orthodox Vedic element gradually asserted itself and the creed known at first as Pāñcarātra or Bhāgavata gradually came to be designated Vaiṣṇava, though the earlier denominations were not forgotten. The name Vaiṣṇava appears in some late verses of the great epic where we are told : "( By listening to the 'Bhārata' ) a Vaiṣṇava acquires that merit which is gained by listening to the eighteen Purāṇas. There is no doubt about that". Numismatic evidence shows that the epithet 'Parama-Vaiṣṇava' came into general use only from about the fifth century A. D.<sup>2</sup> The Traikūṭaka king Dahrasena and his son Vyāghrasena invariably describe themselves in their coin legends as 'Parama Vaiṣṇava' and we know from epigraphic evidence that the former flourished in 456 A. D.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that the impetus to give the Viṣṇu element predominance in the composite creed came from the south for we find in the coins of this dynasty which ruled in S. Gujrat and in the Konkan the term Parama-Vaiṣṇava for the first time, while in the coins of the imperial Guptas of the north of an earlier and later date the older name of the creed, viz. Paramabhāgavata, is used.

A brief account of the origin of Vaiṣṇavism as given above is necessary for the correct understanding of the multifarious images that are associated with it. It will also be useful to refer briefly in their proper places to certain doctrinal tenets as well as mythological stories that are intimately connected with this cult for the ascertainment of the true nature of the Viṣṇuite icons. The devout Bhāgavatas and Vaiṣṇavas worshipped their principal god Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in his varied forms; the images that were enshrined

1. xviii, 6, 67: 'Aṣṭādaśapurāṇāṃ śravaṇād yat phalaṃ bhavet | Tatphalaṃ samavāpnōti Vaiṣṇavonātra saṃśayaḥ'.

2. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri, 'Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Sect', Second Edition, p. 18.

3. E. J. Rapson, 'CCAWKTB', pp. 191-203.



in the main sanctum of the house of the god ('devāyatana'), and that were placed in subsidiary shrines in the temple compound or those that appeared as decorative figure-sculptures on the temple walls portrayed not only one or other of these major constituents of the deity but also illustrated various mythological stories connected with him. One particular form of the deity which was in one case placed in the 'garbhagrha' of a temple might be used as an accessory figure in another. It is a matter of common knowledge that the principal cult object enshrined in the main sanctum of many south Indian Vaiṣṇava shrines of some antiquity is Viṣṇu as Raṅganātha; Raṅganātha, however, is nothing but an elaborate plastic representation of the cosmic god Nārāyaṇa, as will be presently shown. This aspect of the deity is the same as the 'Śeṣaśayana', one of the most commonly represented forms of the Dhruva-beras of Viṣṇu, and both as well as the particular mode of depicting the deity as Vāṭapatraśāyin are based primarily on the concept about the original principle named as Viśvakarman and described in certain late verses of the 'R̥gveda' in this manner: 'That which is beyond the sky, beyond the earth, beyond gods and spirits,—what earliest embryo did the waters contain, in which all the gods were beheld? The waters contained that earliest embryo in which all the gods were collected. One (receptacle) rested upon the navel of the unborn, wherein all beings stood'.<sup>1</sup> The

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1. 'R. V.', X, 82, 5 and 6: 'Paro divā paraḥ eṇā pṛthivīḥ paro devabhīrasurairiyadasti | Kaiḥ svidgarbhaṃ prathamam dadhra āpo yatra devāḥ samapaśyanta viśvo || Tamidgarbhaṃ prathamam dadhra āpo yatra devāḥ samagacchaṇta viśvo | Ajasya nābhāvadhyekamarpitam yasminviśvāni bhuvanāni tasthuḥ'. The translation given above is that of J. Muir. The connection of the primary principle with waters is emphasised in some other Vedic passages; thus, 'R. V.', X, 129, 3 records: 'Tamaḥ āsit tamasā gūḍhaṃ agre apraketaṃ salilam sarvaṃ āh idam | Tucchyenābhvapihitam yadāsitpasastanmahinājyataikam'; it is thus translated by Muir, 'Darkness existed; originally enveloped in darkness, this universe was undistinguishable water; that One which lay void, and wrapped in a husk (or in nothingness), was developed by the power of fervour'. The same idea is expressed in the passage of the 'Atharva veda', X, 7, 41 viz., 'Yo vetasaṃ hiranyayam salile veda sa vai guhyaḥ Prajāpatiḥ'; T. A. G. Rao finds in this passage an euphemistic allusion to the Liṅga and Yoni emblem. Muir says about the use of the word 'vetasa' here, 'I know not whether this word has here its ordinary meaning, or the same sense which is assigned to the word 'vaitasa' in 'R. V.', X 95, 4, 5; 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa', xi, 5, 1, 1; 'Nirukta', iii, 21; 'R. V.', iv, 58, 5; 'Sat. Br.', vii, 5, 2, 11 (in these passages the word means male organ); 'Original Sanskrit Texts', Vol. IV, p. 19, l. n. 49.



connection of the primaeval waters with one god, the great original principle, is consistently maintained in later texts. The chapters 188 and 189 of the Vanparvan of the 'Mahābhārata' describe the condition of things at the time of the dissolution of the universe from which creation takes place ; it is stated there that water was every-where, in it was a child lying on a couch on the branch of a Nyagrodha tree ; in him was the nucleus of the whole universe which was shown to Mārkaṇḍeya by the grace of the child god. Now this concept of the one god none other than Vaṭapatraśāyī Nārāyaṇa is the basis of the Vaṭapatraśāyin image of Viṣṇu sometimes represented in plastic and pictorial art. A 'Manusamhitā' verse records 'that the waters were called Nārās because they were the sons of Nara and since they were the first resting place of Prajāpati, so he came to be known as Nārāyaṇa'.<sup>1</sup> The same verse with slight alteration is found in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the 'Mahābhārata' where Keśava or Hari says to Arjuna that he is known as the resting place or the goal of men ; evidently one was borrowed from the other.<sup>2</sup> The somewhat elaborate discussion about the underlying concept of Nārāyaṇa as given above has been found necessary by me in order to show the basic idea of some of the important forms of the Viṣṇu images. T. A. G. Rao seems to distinguish the Jalaśāyin image—which he describes as one of the minor manifestations of Viṣṇu from the Śeṣaśayana types of Viṣṇu images which are incorporated by him in his section on the Dhruvaberas (principal

1. 'Manusamhitā', I. 10 : 'Āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai naraśūnavaḥ | Tā yadasyayanam pūrvam taśmān Nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ'.

2. 'Mahābhārata' XII, 341 : 'Nivṛtilakṣaṇo dharmastathābhyūdayiko'pi ca | Nārāyaṇaḥ khyātamahamekaṁ sanātanaḥ || Āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai naraśūnavaḥ | Ayanam mama tatpūrvamato Nārāyaṇohyam'. Thus, the lord is at the same time the resting place of the 'naras', which are not only men or men of the heavens i. e., the gods ( cf. the Vedic epithets 'divo naraś' 'nṛpśas' referred to in the second chapter of my book, 'The Development of Hindu Iconography' ) whose sons are the waters, but also takes rest himself on the latter i. e., the primeval waters ; the idea is similar to the one contained in some late Vedic hymns to Brahmaṇaspati and Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa, where we are told that Dakṣa was the father of Aditi as also her son ( 'R.V'. X. 72, 4-5 :—Aditerdakṣo ajāyata Dakṣādaditir pari | Aditirhyajaniṣṭa Dakṣa yā dūhitā tava' ) and that Virāj springs from Puruṣa and Puruṣa again from the Virāj which must denote the waters in the cosmic aspect ( R. V. X. 90, 5 : 'Tasmād' i. e. 'Puruṣād virāja-jāyata virājo adhi puruṣaḥ' ).



images) of the god ; but there is no real difference between the two, and the *Vaṭapatraśāyin* image is nothing but a different manner of illustrating the same concept.<sup>1</sup> As regards my previous observation about the different use that was made of such images, I may refer to the Gupta shrine of Deogarh in the Lalitpur subdivision of the Jhansi District in Central India ; the shrine is certainly a Vaiṣṇava one, in fact it is locally described as the *Daśavatāra* temple and the three '*Pārsvadevatās*' occupying the side niches of the temple are—*Śeṣaśayana*, *Nara-Nārāyaṇa* and *Kari-Varada* forms of *Viṣṇu*. The very elaborate relief carved just in the centre of the architrave of the sanctum, however, shows *Viṣṇu* seated in the '*ardhaparyāṅkāśana*' on the coils of *Ādiśeṣa* whose seven hoods are spread over the god's head and it is presumable that it is a replica of the principal image originally placed in the '*garbhagṛha*' or the main sanctum of the temple.

T. A. G. Rao has classified the '*Dhruvaberas*' of *Viṣṇu* into as many as thirty-six varieties on the basis of the *Pāñcarātra* text '*Vaikhānasāgama*'; these are first broadly divided into four varieties viz. '*yoga*', '*bhoga*', '*vīra*' and '*abhicārika*' on the basis of particular results obtainable by the worship of the individual ones ; then each of these is subdivided into three groups based on the principal pose of the images viz. '*sthānaka*' (standing), '*āsana*' (seated), and '*śayana*' (recumbent); lastly every one of these twelve sub-groups is divided into three classes as '*uttama*', '*madhyama*' and '*adhama*' according to the number of accessory figures that cluster round the central deity. Images of the Buddha can also be grouped under three heads viz. standing, seated and recumbent, but in their case particular incidents in the life of the Master are associated with most of these varieties ; the earlier specimens of the standing Buddha figures though dignified by calm repose are also frequently shown as stepping forward and thus are not fully static in their poses. But the '*sthānaka*' varieties of Vaiṣṇava images from the very first were shown in more or less stationary poses without the suggestion of any perceptible movement in them. As regards the '*uttama*', '*madhyama*' and '*adhama*'

1. This interpretation of the *Nārāyaṇa* aspect of *Vārodeva-Viṣṇu* and the ideology underlying the *Anantaśayana* and *Vaṭapatraśāyin* images have already been discussed briefly in my book, '*The Development of Hindu Iconography*', pp. 301-03.



order, reference may be made to Grünwedel's interesting observation about the 'parallel compositions' in the Hellenistic art of Gandhāra; he remarks about the reliefs depicting scenes from Buddha's life and their replicas, "besides slabs where the figures are numerous—a 'scriptio plena' as one might say—there is often found a 'defectiva', which retains the main design but curtails the rest, thus frequently omitting just what is most important" ('Bud. Art', p. 125). Now, this mode of classification as laid down in the above Pāñcarātra work is not followed in the other iconographic texts dealing with Viṣṇuite icons, so far known to me. When T. A. G. Rao says that 'the materials for the description of the images of Viṣṇu are not so abundant as they are in the case of the images of Śiva', he presumably means that there are not many texts like the 'Vaikhānasāgama' ones dealing with different varieties of the Vaiṣṇava Dhruvaberas; for he himself has collected a number of relevant texts associated with Viṣṇu under 'Vaiṣṇavamūrttyantarāṇi' (other varieties of Viṣṇu images) in the Appendix C to the second part of the first volume of his monumental work. These texts help us a great deal in identifying and describing the many varieties of Viṣṇu icons of the early, mediaeval and subsequent periods found in different parts of northern and eastern India. There is no doubt, however, that the above mode of grouping them as standing, seated and reclining would very well be applicable to such figures hailing from different parts of India, for most of them are shown in one or other of these poses. The other basis of classification into 'yoga', 'bhoga', 'vīra', and 'abhicārika' varieties is only occasionally followed in the north and even in the south; even when Viṣṇu is depicted seated in 'yogāsana' with his "natural" hands in the 'dhyānamudrā', he is lavishly decorated with ornaments and often accompanied by both or one of his consorts, indicating that those particular types of figures fall under both the classes viz. 'yoga' and 'bhoga'. Rao, himself, could not illustrate the 'vīra' and 'abhicārika' varieties from the south Indian Vaiṣṇava shrines.<sup>1</sup> A plausible explanation of the

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1. The seated figure of Viṣṇu from Aihole labelled Adhamavirīsanamūrti in plate XXX of the first volume of his book can not be described as such without doubt;—the god is seated in the 'sukhāsana' pose on the coils of Ādiśeṣa and the description which is given of such a type in the text does not at all tally with the actual relief.



comparative paucity of the last two varieties can be suggested ; as the second of them was certainly of an inauspicious character, such a one was most probably not preserved for worship. Rao says : "The 'abhicārika' form which is worshipped for the purpose of inflicting defeat and death on enemies is looked upon as inauspicious and is unfit to be set up for worship in temples built in towns and villages" ( op. cit., Vol. I. Part I, pp. 20-1 ) ; these were set up in forests, mountains, marshy tracts, fortresses and other such places ( 'vana giri jala dūrge rāṣṭrānte śatrudīn-mukhe' ). The 'bhoga' varieties were the most numerous ones and the reason is obvious ; the acquisition of wealth and prosperity is the desire of the majority of such worshippers and the following observation of Rao should be referred to in this connection : "The 'bhoga' form is the form best fitted to have the temple therefore constructed within towns and villages, as it is conceived to be the giver of all happiness to its worshippers and has therefore to be worshipped and prayed to by all sorts of men and women belonging to all conditions of life" ( ibid., p. 120 ). I have identified one black chlorite Viṣṇu figure in the collection of the Indian Museum of the early mediaeval period hailing from Chaitanpur, Burdwan, as standing for an 'abhicārika sthānaka' form of Viṣṇu image and it is so far unique. Definitely recognisable 'vīra' varieties of Vaiṣṇava icons were not found by me in my study of the museum specimens as well as early temple reliefs both from the north and the south of India.

One of the earliest datable iconographic texts dealing with the Viṣṇu image of general nature is the collection of five couplets incorporated in the chapter on Pratimālakṣaṇam by Varāhamihira in his 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā'. These verses can be translated thus : "The holy Viṣṇu should be made with eight, four or two arms ; his breast should be marked with the 'śrīvatsa' sign and be adorned with the 'kaustubha' jewel ; his colour should be pale green like that of the 'ataśī' flower and he should wear yellow garment and have a smiling face ; he should be decorated with ear-rings and a jewelled head-dress and his neck, breast, the shoulders and arms should be raised i. e., full and fleshy ; his right hands should hold a sword, a club and an arrow, the fourth being in the assurance pose, while his left hands should carry a bow, a shield, a wheel and a conch-shell. If one wishes



to make him four-armed, then one of his right hands should be shown in the assurance pose, the other one holding a mace, while his left hands should have a conch-shell and a wheel. The right hand of a two-armed image should show the assurance pose while the left one should bear a conch-shell. Those who desire to attain welfare and happiness should have the images of Viṣṇu carved in this way"<sup>1</sup>. This shows that Viṣṇu images endowed with as many as eight arms were already in vogue by the middle of the sixth century A. D., when the above text was compiled. But eight-armed Viṣṇu images seem to have been known much earlier in the Kushān period; the attributes in the respective hands of one such fragmentary statuette described by V. S. Agrawala do not conform, however, to the above text. Of its four right hands which are preserved, "three seem to carry the mount Govardhana, 'pāśa' ( or 'śakti' ) and 'daṇḍa' and the fourth one doubled at the elbow is stretched towards the breast and also holds an indistinct object. This represents the 'virāṭa' form of Viṣṇu and is the only male figure in which such multiplicity of hands is visible"<sup>2</sup>. Reference has already been made to a twelve-armed goddess carved on the right facade of the Udayagiri cave bearing an inscription of the Gupta year 82 ( 401-2 A. D. ), which was correctly identified as the Mahiṣāsūramardīnī form of the goddess Durgā, mythologically regarded as the sister of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, in one of her aspects ( Fleet was not correct in his criticism of Cunningham's identification). Varieties of standing Viṣṇu images approximating to the description given in the 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā' have been discovered in large numbers among the extant relievo-sculptures datable from the fifth and sixth centuries A. D. onwards; and it must be observed that such images are almost invariably four-armed, rarely eight-armed but seldom two-armed. I have noted in chapters IV and V of my book, 'Development of Hindu Iconography', a few representations of the four-armed figures of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu on early Indian coins and seals of the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding the Christian era. Thus, here is a definite corroboration from the archaeological point of view of the fact that the tendency to supernaturalise the cult-object, the

1. 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā', Drivedi's edition, Vol. II, Chapter 57, P. 778, verses 31-5.

2. J. L. S. O. A., Vol. V, P. 124, pl. XIV, fig. 3.



main starting nucleus of which was a human hero, was at work from comparatively early times. In the case of the other man-gods like Buddha and Mahāvīra, no conscious attempt was ever made to endow their figures with more than two hands, though the accessory divinities in the pantheon connected with the respective cults were given many more arms than two. It must be observed, however, that in the iconographic presentation of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnatory form of Viṣṇu, he is seldom endowed with more than two arms (for a 15th century A. D. eight-armed image of Madanagopala—a variety of Kṛṣṇa, refer to Rao, op. cit., vol. I, Part I, Pl. LXIII).

The earliest plastic representation of a four-armed standing Viṣṇu is the Kushan relief No. 2520 in the collection of the late Pandit Radha Krishna of Mathura; it contains, among others, such a figure holding a heavy mace and a wheel in the back right and left hands respectively, while "the two normal hands are exactly like those in the Bodhisattva images, i. e., the right in 'abhayamudrā' and the left holding a monk's bottle of long neck and conical bottom".<sup>1</sup> One of the oldest four-armed 'sthānaka mūrtis' of Viṣṇu belonging to the early Gupta period is to be found on the right facade of the Candragupta cave at Udayagiri near Besnagar. It is unfortunately very much damaged, but enough remains to disclose its identity; the figure is well-decorated with ornaments like 'kīrīṭa-mukūṭa', 'kuṇḍala', 'hāra', 'keyūra', 'vanamālā' etc., and is standing in the 'samapāda-sthānaka' pose; the hands seem to bifurcate—two on each side from the elbow, and the back hands appear to be placed on the Āyudhapuruṣas; the right front hand is broken while the front left one holds a conch-shell; Gadā-devī is recognisable on the right while the Cakra-puruṣa on the left is somewhat damaged; D. R. Bhandarkar saw in the device like the so-called Nāga symbol on its breast the 'kaustubha' jewel which has been described by A. K. Coomaraswamy as the 'Śrīvatsa mark' (the 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā' text enjoins the carving of both).<sup>2</sup> The Udayagiri image

1. Agrawala's remark on the above relief is worth noting. 'It shows the transition from a Buddhist to a Brahmanical image'. It is to be dated in the 1st century A. D.; J. I. S. O. A., Vol. V, p. 124, pl. XIV, fig. 2.

2. Cunningham, 'Archaeological Survey Reports', Vol. X, Pl. XVII; Banerjee, 'D.H.I.', Ch. IV, p. 205.



of Viṣṇu very closely agrees with the description of the four-armed images of Viṣṇu as given in the 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā' passage quoted above. The sculpture No. E6 in the collection of the Mathura Museum depicts a standing male deity, its lower portion being lost. Vogel thought that it might be a Bodhisattva; but its 'kiriṭa makuṭa', 'vanamālā', the 'yajñopavīta' and four arms leave little doubt that it is a four-armed Viṣṇu of the Gupta period. Vogel dated it on stylistic grounds in the Kushan period; but Kramrisch's dating of it in the Gupta period is more acceptable. Agrawala agrees with Kramrisch and remarks about it: "It shows all the highest qualities of the Golden Age, the face revealing the contemplative serenity of celestial 'samādhi'. The elaborate crown is adorned with the jewel (forming a triratna shape with its scroll), lion faces emitting pearl festoons ('simhāsyodgīrṇa mauktikajāla') and a 'makarikā' ornament consisting of two addorsed alligator heads. The figure wears a 'vaijayantī', 'yajñīya', 'suvarṇasūtra', 'keyūras', 'ekāvalī' and 'śatayaṣṭika devachanda' necklace, and also a creased clinging loin cloth ('sūkṣma vimāla kaṭivastra') held by a girdle technically known as 'netrasūtra' in contemporary literature on account of its similarity with the chord round the 'manthana daṇḍa'. The image was four-armed. The fore-arms separated near the elbow, the bifurcating line being still visible on the left side".<sup>1</sup> For another two-armed standing image in partial agreement with the details of a Dvibhūja Viṣṇu as laid down in the same text, reference may be made to 'the colossal image lying on the ground (11' 9" without the feet), that was discovered by Carlleyle at Rupavas, 10 miles to the south-west of Fatehpur Sikri, U. P. It has been described as follows, "the head is surmounted by a five-sided crown terminating in five angular points (one of the varieties of the 'kiriṭa-makūṭa', resembling a turreted crown); at its back is a large circular halo ('śiraścakra'); ears long and pendulous, pointed below and slit and decorated with earrings of extra-ordinary size and form; a necklace with a lozenge-shaped or diamond shaped object pendant from it (this is 'kaustubha maṇi'); another band or necklace (this is probably the 'yajñopavīta') passing

1. 'J. I. S. O. A.', Vol. V, p. 125. See also, Vogel, 'M. M. C' p. 107; Kramrisch, 'Die figurale Plastik der Gupta Zeit', p. 22, fig. 5.



down over the breast in a loop, as far as the waist ; the figure of a lotus flower on each breast ( are these the 'śrīvatsa' marks ? ) ; the image is two-handed, a 'śaṅkha' is placed in the right hand and a 'cakra' in the left ; a band or sash loosely tied round the waist with the ends hanging down in front ; another series of bands pass from the loins down over the legs above the knees ( these are the folds of the cloth worn by the deity ) ; it is executed in a darkish dingy-coloured red sandstone". After giving this detailed description of the sculpture ( its date appears to be fairly early ), Carlleyle is evidently wrong when he says, 'It must be a representation of either of the Hindu divinity Buddha or Sūrya'.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that it is a two-armed Viṣṇu image, its special attributes disclosing its identity ; the difference between it and the description of two-armed Viṣṇu in the 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā' passage quoted above lies in the fact that the latter's right hand is to be shown in the 'abhaya' pose ( 'śāntikaraḥ, śāntidaḥ' has been explained by Utpala as 'draṣṭurabhimukha ūrdhvāṅguliḥ śāntidaḥ karaḥ', i. e., the palm with fingers pointing upwards facing the spectator, which pose is the same as 'abhaya' mentioned in other texts ), while its left hand is to hold a 'śaṅkha'. As regards eight-armed standing images of the god, reference may be made to two early sculptures both hailing from the south and both conforming to a great extent to the 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā' description. The Badami stone figure of standing Viṣṇu shows in the four right hands 'cakra', 'śara', 'gadā', and 'khaḍga', and in the four left ones, 'śaṅkha', 'kheṭaka' ( shield ), 'kārmuka' ( bow ), the other hand being in the 'kaṭihasta' pose ; the placing of the attributes, it will be seen, closely conforms to the alignment of the same in the above text, the only difference lying in the case of the 'cakra' being placed in one of the right hands, the 'abhaya' pose being not shown and the front left hand being in the 'kaṭihasta' pose. There is a curious bust on the top of the 'kirīṭa makuṭa' of the figure ( decorated with the usual ornaments and dress of Viṣṇu ), which seems to be that of the Narasiṃha incarnation ; this led T. A. G. Rao to describe the composition as that of Vaikunṭha which, as the 'Rūpamaṇḍana' text informs us, is four-faced and eight-armed—the 'gadā', 'khaḍga', 'śara' and 'cakra' being placed in

1. C. 'A. S. R.', Vol. VI, p. 20.



the right hands, and 'śaṅkha', 'kheṭaka', 'dhanu' and 'padma' in the left ones—the central, right, the left and the back faces being that of a man, Narasimha, Varāha and a woman respectively. The Badami relief however does not show the deity really as four-faced and the lotus flower is not shown in any of the hands.<sup>1</sup> The eight-armed Viṣṇu figure from Conjeeveram, reproduced by H. Krishna Sastri shows a similar apportionment of attributes, with this difference only that the natural hands are shown in the 'abhaya' and 'varada' poses; the figure is well-decorated and is attended on its right by Garuḍa with his hands in the 'añjali' pose, while on its left by a bearded sage, either Bhṛgu or Mārkaṇḍeya, with his right hand raised in the praising pose.<sup>2</sup>

Standing Viṣṇu images, endowed with more than eight arms are known, but they generally belong to a period much later than that of most of the above just discussed and they can be identified and given new names with the help of such late compilations as Hemadri's 'Vratakhanda' and Maṇḍana's 'Rūpamaṇḍana'. But, before a somewhat detailed description of a few such extant reliefs is given, it will be better to give some account of a few more Caturbhuja 'sthānaka mūrtis' of Viṣṇu which were so commonly enshrined in the early and late mediaeval Vaiṣṇava temples of different parts of India—especially in those of northern and eastern India. These images of the god can usually be classed under one or other of

1. T. A. G. Rao, op. cit., Vol. I, Part I, p. 256, Pl. LXXV., R. D. Banerjee, 'Basreliefs of Badami', p. 31, Pl. XIV. b. Banerjee identifies it as a representation of 'the Virāṭa Puruṣa or the gigantic form assumed by Viṣṇu in his dwarf or Vāmana incarnation just before measuring the earth and the heaven with two steps'. He criticises Rao's description of it as Vaikunṭhanātha who ought to have four faces which are wanting in the Badami bas-relief; besides the figure is not depicted seated on Garuḍa as required in the case of Vaikunṭhanātha. But the small bust with a lion's head and four hands (two being placed on the 'kirita' of the main figure, while the remaining two hold a wheel in the left and a conch in the right) is inexplicable. Banerjee says: 'This is evidently a representation of Narasimha but no connection can be traced in any of the Purāṇas between the Man-lion and the Dwarf incarnations of Viṣṇu, nor does the narrative of the Dwarf incarnation contain any reference about the presence of any abnormal being shaped as a Man-lion'. Mr. Banerjee's suggestion is also not very convincing, the only thing in favour of it being that in the Trivikrama figures found in cave Nos. II and IV, the Virāṭa-rūpa of the transformed dwarf is more or less similarly represented with eight hands and the same mode of placing the attributes in them but without the bust on the top; in the latter there are many accessory figures which illustrate the story of the Dwarf incarnation and which are absent in the relief under discussion.

2. H. Krishnasastri, 'South Indian Gods and Goddesses' p. 17, fig. 11.



the Vyūhas, of which more will be spoken hereafter, or some of the 'vibhavas' ( incarnatory forms ) especially several of the celestial ones, the human incarnations being usually endowed with two arms. One of the earliest four-armed standing Viṣṇus is the relief-like free standing sculpture, discovered at Hankrail, Maldah, and now in the collection of the Rajshahi Museum. The front right and the back left hands as well as the leg of this Viṣṇu figure are partially broken, while its back right and front left hands hold a lotus bud and a conch-shell respectively ; its sparse ornaments consist of a low 'kirīṭa', 'kuṇḍalas', 'hāra', 'aṅgada' and a 'yajñopavīta'. Kramrisch quite correctly dates it in the 7th century A. D. The black basalt standing image of a four-armed Viṣṇu from Chaitanpur, Burdwan and now in the collection of the Indian Museum is a unique piece of sculpture and is perhaps the only known specimen of this type. The central figure is practically fully in the round, its head and shoulders are encircled by a 'śiraścakra' ( halo ) partially preserved and its right and left back hands are connected with the knob of the 'gadā' ( shown also as Gadā-devī below with a staff in her left hand ) and the rim of the 'cakra' ( also depicted as Cakrapuruṣa with a staff below ) respectively, which are carved behind the top of the male and the female attendants. The front right hand of the central figure holds a lotus-bud, its front left carrying a conch-shell. The figure is very sparsely ornamented, a curious string of amulets round the neck replacing the usual 'hāra' and 'vanamālā'; the loin cloth devoid of any artistic arrangement is treated in a very uncouth manner ; the extremely elongated face, the big protruding eyes, the projecting muscles and bones and the partially emaciated belly—all these features endow this Viṣṇu image with a character which requires explanation. The 'Vaikhāṇasāgama' describes the Abhicārikasthānakamūrti of Viṣṇu in the following manner : The "Abhicārikasthānakamūrti of the god is to be shown with two or four arms, smoke-coloured, wearing dark green garments, with emaciated face and limbs, endowed with 'tamoguṇa', eyes cast upwards ( i. e. protruding ), without any such attendants as Brahmā and other gods".<sup>1</sup> Rao who described these types of Viṣṇu images on the basis of

1. T. A. G. Rao, 'op. cit.', Vol. I, Part II, App. C. P. 20 : 'Abhicārikasthānakam devaṃ dvibhujam caturbhujam vā dhūmravarṇam śyāmavastradharaṃ śuṣkavaktraṃ śuṣkāṅgaṃ tamoguṇānvitamūrdhhanetraṃ Brahmādevavivarjitaṃ ... kṛtavyaḥ'.



this text could not illustrate the same with the help of any specimen known to him. It has already been suggested by me that such 'abhicāra' images were perhaps destroyed after their purpose had been served. The image now being discussed represents, in all likelihood, such a variety; it is the only such specimen so far known to me. In any case, it is one of the most unique types of Viṣṇu images so far discovered, and R. P. Chanda's description of it as an inferior specimen of the Gupta period requires modification ('A. S. I. A. R.', 1925-6, p. 153). The iconographic features as well as its seemingly southern style justify us in assigning to it a somewhat later date; probably one in the 8th century A. D. will not be far wrong.<sup>1</sup>

In the several early specimens of the four-armed standing figures of Viṣṇu noticed above, his two consorts, Śrī and Puṣṭi (Sarasvatī) or Śrī and Bhūdevī are not found; in the northern and eastern Indian varieties of such images of the mediaeval period, the two former are almost invariably the attending consorts of the deity. The accompanying figures in the former group of sculptures are 'āyudhapuruṣas' who also occasionally appear as accessories on the late reliefs; but in the latter, the personified representations of the emblems (not always present) are a few among the other attendants and accessory motifs such as the consorts, the vehicle, the two gate-keepers of Viṣṇu named as Viśvakṣena and Vatsadaṇḍa, the leogryph, the Gandharva couples performing music, the garland-bearing Vidyādhara and lastly the Kīrttimukha finial on the top centre of the 'prabhāvalī' (the back slab or stele). The 'Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra' describes the four-armed image of Vāsudeva in the following manner:—'Vāsudeva the god of the gods should be made with four arms; in his upper right and lower right hands should be placed a wheel and a lotus respectively; in the upper left should be a mace and in the lower left a beautiful conch-shell; an image characterised by such features is auspicious; Śrī and Puṣṭi should be made (on either side) with a lotus flower and a lute ('vīṇā') in their respective hands and they should be of the height of

1. 'J. I. S. O. A.', Vol. VIII, pp. 159-61.



the thigh (of the central figure) and slightly bent; various Vidyādhara are to be carved as attached to the lustrous circle ('prabhā-maṇḍala', 'bhā-maṇḍala' or 'prabhāvalī'—the back slab in which the high relief was carved; the technical name of the original stone slab is really the 'piṇḍikā'—but sometimes the 'piṇḍikā' and the 'pīṭhikā', the latter meaning pedestal, are used as synonymous terms); the 'prabhā' should be carefully decorated by sages with leogryphs ('gajavyāla') and other motifs; the pedestal should be endowed with beauty and be of the lustre (shape) of a lotus (in the edition of the 'Haribhaktivilāsa' it is 'paṅkābha'; but it is certainly a mistake for 'padmābha', which not only gives us a better sense but actually appears in the 'Agnipurāṇa' passage, based on the 'Hayaśīrṣa'); (Vāsudeva image) should be made according to different modes current in different countries by good teachers (or people of various localities).<sup>1</sup> The numerous standing figures of Caturbhuja Viṣṇu found in the north and east of India conform to a very great extent to the above description. The difference in most cases lies in the placing of the attributes in the upper hands, the 'gadā' being placed in the upper right and 'cakra' in the upper left, while the lotus is usually a tiny mark on the upturned palm of the lower right hand in the 'varada' pose—the attendant figures in some specimens being many while in others only a few. As regards the transposition of the attributes, we shall presently see under Vyūha images of Viṣṇu, that this generally determined their different varieties. Some texts, however, do not insist on the rigid conformity of the sculptor to the manner of placing the emblems. The author of the 'Matsya Purāṇa' says, 'I shall (now) speak about the placing of weapons in the hands of four-armed images. Mace and lotus should be made (placed) on the right (hands) and conch-shell and wheel on the left. In the Kṛṣṇa incarnation, the mace in the left hand is praiseworthy. The conch-shell

1. The above is a free rendering of the following 'Hayaśīrṣa' verses as quoted by Gopala Bhatta in his 'Haribhaktivilāsa':—'Vāsudevaṃ prakurvīta caturbbhūṃ sureśvaram | Dakṣiṇopari cakraṃ tu padmaṃ cūḍhaṃ prakalpayet | Vāmopari gadā kār्या śaṃkhaṃ cūḍhaṃ suśobhanam | Etallakṣaṇasamyuktā pratimā śubhadā bhavet | Śrīpuṣṭi cāpi kartavye padmaviṇākarānvite | Urumātroochritāyāme kiñcidāvarjite tathā | Nānāvidyādharaṃ kār्याu prabhāmaṇḍalasamsthitaṃ | Prabhāṃ vibhūṣayed yatnād gajavyālādiḥkṛtvā | Paṅkābhapaḍāpīṭhaṃ tathā śobhāsamanvitaṃ | Deśadeśanurūpeṇ kartavyaṃ deśikottamāḥ'. The 'Agni Purāṇa' verses 47-49 in chapter 34 (Vāṅavasi edition) are an abridged copy of the above.



and wheel should be made ( placed ) from the top ( upper hand ) according to the wish ( of the sculptor )'.<sup>1</sup> It is thus evident that the difference in this respect depends on various factors and one can only guess which particular text was followed in the construction of individual images ; where the greatest conformity exists between one particular text and an image, it is presumable to hold that the maker of the latter followed the former. The blue schist sculpture No. D. 35 in the Mathura Museum with a plain parabolic stele slightly pointed at the top represents a four-armed Viṣṇu standing in the 'samapādashānaka' pose between Śrī and Puṣṭi carrying lotus flower and long lute respectively on either side, the upper right, upper left and lower left hands of the central figure holding a 'gadā' a 'cakra' and a 'śaṅkha' respectively, while the lower right is in the 'varada' pose with a tiny lotus mark in the centre of the palm ; each of the three figures stands on a 'viśvapadma' ; the god and his consorts are profusely decorated with their usual ornaments ; on and below the central lotus on which Viṣṇu stands are carved the miniature figures

1. 'Matsya Purāṇa', Ch. 258, verses, 8—10 ; 'Caturbhujasya vakṣyāmi yathāivāyudhasaṁsthitiḥ | Dakṣiṇena gadā padmaṁ Vāsudevasya kṛāyet | Vāmataḥ śaṅkhacakre ca karttavye bhūtimicchatā | Kṛṣṇavatāre tu gadā vāmahaste praśasyate | Yatheccayaḥ śaṅkhacakre copariṣṭāt prakalpayet' | Then many more details are given about the attendant figures like Pṛthivī ( between the legs of the god ), Garuḍa ( either on the right or just in front ), lotus-carrying goddess Lakṣmī ( on the left ), Śrī and Puṣṭi with lotuses ( on the sides ), the Vidyādhara, divine musical instruments ( 'deva-duṇḍubhi' ), Gandharva couple, leaf and creeper, lion and tiger motifs, 'kalpalatā' motif, and praising gods,—from the upper part of the 'torāṇa', the gateway or the 'prabhāvali' in this case, downwards—'torāṇāṁ copariṣṭāt'. The Viṣṇu reliefs which are elaborate usually show this order of arrangement of the accessories on the back slab ; but in the extant Viṣṇu images Lakṣmī is not distinguished from Śrī, Puṣṭi carries a vīṇā instead of a lotus, lion and tiger motif is replaced by a lion and elephant motif—'gajavyāla' of the 'Hayaśirṣa' text—, the earth goddess is not shown between the legs of the god and the praising gods—if we do not take the usually identified donor couples as divine beings—are not shown. But what is interesting in the 'Matsya Purāṇa' passage on the iconography of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva is the fact that the author commences it with the couplet—, 'Viṣṇostāvat pravakṣyāmi yādgrūpaṁ praśasyate | Śaṅkhachakradharaṁ śāntaṁ padmabastāṁ gadādharaṁ, then refers to eight-armed, four-armed and two-armed varieties of such images ( Kvacidatlabhujāṁ vidyācaturbhujamathāparam | Dvibhujāścāpi karttavyo bhavaneṣu purodhasā—the assignment of the attributes to the right and left hands of the eight-armed varieties which are rare closely follows the same as in the 'Bṛhatsaṁhitā' text previously mentioned ), and after giving the description of the four-armed Vāsudeva image as noted above, ends with the assertion, 'Evamvidho bhaved-Viṣṇostribhagenasya pīṭhikī'. Thus, it seems that though Kṛṣṇa is distinguished from Viṣṇu, this being regarded as one of his incarnations, no distinction is made between Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu, and this should be noted especially in connection with the remarks which I have made about the origin of the Vaiṣṇava cult.



of Garuḍa and the donor couple. The severely plain 'prabhāvalī' and the very few accessories characterise the image as 'Adhāmabhogasthānakamūrti', if one is to explain it in terms of the 'Vaikhānasāgama' text; on the same grounds as also on the basis of the style of carving, it is to be dated in the 11th century.<sup>1</sup> A profitable comparison can be made with this graceful relief, of the potstone four-armed figure of Viṣṇu discovered at Taxila a few years ago. This is described by A. D. Siddiqui in this way, 'Potstone figure of Viṣṇu (ht. 8. 8"), standing with the usual attributes viz. conchshell, discus, club and lotus in the four hands, upper part of Garuḍa below on the pedestal between two legs, wears elaborate head dress, ear pendants, necklace and bangles etc., 'yajñopavīta' falls over left side, part of the halo with beaded border missing; rather crude workmanship'.<sup>2</sup> There are some points of iconographic interest, which ought to be noted in this connection; the 'gadā' is shown in a manner somewhat similar to that of the club in the hand of Vāsudeva in the Kushan seal and in the hand of Śiva in Maues' coins and copper seal of Śivarakṣita, noted in the fourth chapter of my 'Development of Hindu Iconography', and the back right and left hands rest on the topmost knob of the 'gadā' and the rim of the 'cakra' as in the case of the Vāsudeva Viṣṇu in the Kushan seal, the front right and left hands hold a lotus by its stalk and a conch-shell; the half-length figure of Garuḍa on the plain pedestal between the legs of the deity distinctly reminds us of the Yakṣa figure below Buddha frontally represented in some Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa reliefs of Gandhāra; the head-dress is reminiscent of the turreted crown usually found on the heads of some city deities depicted in the Hellenistic art of Gandhāra; the sculpture is nearly fully in the round and there are no attendant figures. The figure is one of the latest Gandhāra specimens of art.

1. J. PH. Vogel, 'Mathura Museum Catalogue' p. 101, Pl. XVIII; Vogel remarked about it, 'it is a fine specimen of mediæval Brahmanical art'. Gopinath Rao reproduced it in his book, Vol. I, Pl. XXI, and named it simply as Sthānakamūrti; in the body of the text, ('op. cit.', p. 100), he characterised it as Trivikrama on the manner of placing the attributes in the four hands and remarked, "The chief peculiarities worth noticing in this image are the curious cut of the face and the shape of the 'kirita'". The face, according to him, is characteristic of north Indian sculptures in general and shows Mongoloid features.

2. 'A. S. I. A. R.', 1935-36, p. 35, Pl. XL (a).



If one now studies a few mediaeval reliefs of four-armed Viṣṇu in stone or bronze hailing from eastern India, one can not but be struck with the great elaboration and wealth of detail with which such figures were carved by the skilled artists of this region. The iconography has much developed and the technique has attained to a great perfection. In the latest specimens, however, of this group of sculptures, the quality of freshness, vitality and aesthetic beauty give way to the tendency of over-elaboration and profusion of ornaments which mark the sculptures of the later Chalukyas and the Hoysalas in the south; what is gained in iconographic details is lost in the artistic quality. Two hornblende schist reliefs, exhibits Nos. 9211 and 2592 in the Gupta Gallery of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, the former hailing from Rajshahi (north Bengal) and the latter from Sarishadaha, 24 Pergannas (south Bengal), will prove the authenticity of my remark. The former is datable in the middle of the 10th century A. D., on account of such undoubtedly early features as the round upper part of the back slab, the twisted rope pattern encircling the halo, the 'Kiriṭa' not yet pointed and without the later 'āmalaka', the separate plastic layers at the back of the attendant consorts, etc. It shows a composition more or less similar to the Mathura Museum statuette, the difference lying in the fact, that the stele does not only contain the figures of Śrī and Puṣṭi with raised 'prabhās' of their own, but also the leogryphs, the jewel-vomitting peacocks, the garland-bearing Vidyādhara on either side with the 'kīrttimukha' at the top, which are absent in the latter; on the central face of the 'tri-ratha' pedestal, the lotus foliage is embossed and is thus of an early date, while on the right and left faces are Garuḍa and the donor couples respectively. The figure which is partially fully in the round is sparsely ornamented and even in spite of the additional iconographic details is characterised by that simple grace which is special to the sculptures of this period; the plastic qualities of the main figure and its attendants as also of the decorative devices of the 'prabhāvali' show in a remarkable manner the characteristic vigour of early Pāla art. Figures more or less similar to the above have been found in large numbers in eastern India and are exhibits in any museum of Bengal with a representative archaeological collection. The inscribed image of the same variety of standing Viṣṇu



discovered at Baghaura, Tippera, and similar in most of its iconographic details to the preceding specimen, is dated in the third year of King Mahīpāla I, and thus it belongs to the 11th century A. D. On referring to the Sarishadaha image which is also shown partly in the round, one at once sees that it is of great interest though much later, probably by more than a century, though the composition follows the earlier iconographic mode up to a certain extent. Viṣṇu, here, stands on a 'navaratha' pedestal, with his back hands resting on the knob of a 'gadā' and the rim of a 'cakra', before each of which is shown its personified representation (the Gadādevī holding a fruit in her right hand and lotus with a long stalk in her left while the Cakrapuruṣa holds a lotus with a long stalk in his left, his right being in the 'jñānamudrā' pose), his front right hand holding a globular object with a spiral at the top (probably an artistic representation of a lotus bud) and front left, a conchshell; on the extreme corners of the lower part of the stele are to be found two other Āyudha-puruṣas viz. Śaṅkha-puruṣa, with his right hand in the 'vyākhyāna' pose and his left hand holding a lotus with a long stalk on whose pericarp is placed a tiny conch-shell, and the Padmapuruṣa with his right hand in 'abhaya' pose and his left holding a long stalk lotus with the lotusbud-like object placed on its 'karṇikā'. The relief does not contain the figures of the divine consorts and its iconographer thought it more expedient to show the personified representations of two other attributes which are not usually shown in sculptures; he was probably following a text which is unknown to us. The omission of the consorts of the god seems to be intentional; the donor, carved on the extreme left corner of the pedestal, is a single figure. From his beard, his peculiar mode of dressing the hair and other features he appears to be an ascetic; thus, the image, though highly decorated, is of the yogic variety and the donor by worshipping this variety of Viṣṇu wanted to attain proficiency in his yogic activities. The raised lotus foliage protruding out of the middle of the pedestal shown in two layers, the Garuḍa in front, the profuse ornaments of the central as well as the attendant figures enable one to date the relief in the 12th Century A. D. If a comparison is made between this image and the other one from Rajshahi just described, and the standing image of Caturbhuja Viṣṇu found at Ganpur, Rajshahi and now exhibit



No. 5008 in the Indian Museum, the contrast will appear to be still greater. In place of the Cakrapuruṣa and Gadādevī on either side appear Śrī and Puṣṭi with their usual attributes, the Śaṅkha and Padmapuruṣas figuring on the extreme right and left corners as in the Sarishadaha sculpture; the normal attributes 'padmāṅka', 'gadā', 'cakra' and 'śaṅkha' are placed in the four hands from the lower right onwards, and the central figure and all its accessories as well as the back slab are profusely covered with ornamentation (the very pedestal is an over-elaborate one consisting of as many as thirteen faces). This is undoubtedly a work of the 12th century A. D. and a glance at it as well as similar others of the same period will at once show what a great deterioration in iconographic art has taken place. It will be of interest to refer to one or two metal images of Viṣṇu in this connection. I can not select any better specimens than two of the five bronze images from Rungpur, both of which are exhibits in the Indian Museum (N. S. 2249 and N. S. 2250). The first stands on a lotus on a three-storied 'pañcaratha' pedestal, accompanied by his two consorts, the placing of the attributes conforming to the mode followed in the last-described stone image; there are no Āyudha-puruṣas and the back slab having stylised flames issuing from its side is otherwise severely plain; the 'śiraścakra' in the form of a 16-petalled lotus is flanked on its lower side with a peacock or swan-like bird vomiting jewels (?) on either side; in place of the 'kīrttimukha' on the top centre we find an ornamental finial which was originally set with precious stones; the eyes and the 'tilaka' of the central figure are embossed with silver; Garuḍa is shown in front of Viṣṇu with his hands in the añjali pose and the donor couple appear on the lowermost corner of the pedestal on the left. The other, 2250, shows a similar Viṣṇu, but there are some differences in the composition; the jewelled 'makuṭa' of the deity, the lotus 'śiraścakra' of thirty-two longish petals without the birds, the absence of Garuḍa and the donor-couple on the pedestal, the lotus held with a long stalk by the left-hand attendant consort of the god (Spooner thinks that it can not be Puṣṭi as in the other bronze specimen where she holds a 'vīṇā' and should be described as Vasumatī as is laid down in the 'Viśvakarmāvatāra śilpāśāstra'; it may be so, but we can explain it also as Puṣṭi with the help of the



'Matsya Purāṇa' text which, as we have shown before, puts lotuses in the hands of both Śrī and Puṣṭi)—all these features and the less elaborate pedestal differentiate it from the first. In the cases of both, the stele, the pedestal, the separate figures—and in the case of the second one the 'śiraścakra' also—are cast separately and put together by means of contrivances. There is no doubt, however, about the artistic excellence of both and the artist or artists who were responsible for the wax models of the two were great masters. Both these images have been dated by Spooner in the 11th century A. D., and it is certainly not a case of ante-dating.<sup>1</sup> A much smaller standing image of Viṣṇu in silver in the same show-case in the Indian Museum, shows the god with many more iconographic details; over and above what we find in the second of the two bronze images just described, one sees here, two atlantes, one on either side, the leogryph above it, the 'makara', the gandharva couple (the female dancing on the left, the male playing the lute on the right) and the 'kīrttimukha' finial; what is still more interesting is the fact that there are tiny figures of the ten incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu shown on the top part of the prabhāvalī,—the correct and stereotyped order is not followed in their presentation and they appear in the following manner: Matsya, Kūrma, Narasiṃha, Varāha, Vāmana, Paraśu Rāma (?), Rāghava Rāma, Balarāma (?), Buddha and Kalkin. The silver image is undoubtedly of lesser artistic merit than the two previous bronze ones, but still it is a very worthy example of metal casting and can not be dated later than the 11th century A. D.

It will be of interest now to refer to a few specimens of 'Sthānaka mūrtis' of Viṣṇu in stone, which are of unique importance from the iconographic point of view. Some of them show clear traces of Mahāyāna Buddhist influence and can very well be studied together with several multi-armed standing images hailing from different parts of Bengal, which will be also briefly referred to in this connection. The standing

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1. The bronze images inside a big earthen jar were first discovered by a ploughman tilling his field in a village in the district of Rungpur, north Bengal. Spooner gave a thorough account about them in his article on 'Viṣṇu Images from Rungpur', in A. S. I. A. R., 1911—12.



image of Viṣṇu (Trivikrama) from Surohor in the district of Dinajpur, north Bengal, now in the collection of the Rajshahi Museum, falls under this class. The central figure is made to stand under a canopy of seven serpent hoods; the 'gadā' and 'cakra' shown in the back hands are placed on full blown lotus flowers; instead of Śrī and Puṣṭi on its either side are placed two male figures identifiable as Āyudhapuruṣas on account of 'cakra' (or 'padma'?) and 'śaṅkha' placed on 'nīlotpalas' held by the left hands of the respective attendants; a miniature figure like that of Amitābha (Dhyānī-Buddha) is placed just above the central snake hood and a six-armed dancing figure of Śiva is carved inside a medallion on the middle face of the 'pañcaratha' pedestal below. The relief is datable in the early part of the 12th century A. D.<sup>1</sup> Another very interesting exhibit (No. 661) in the same Museum, originally procured from Kalandarpur in the district of Bogra, north Bengal, is somewhat similar to the above, though there are certain differences. It belongs to the sub-variety of Viṣṇu image named Śrīdhara (according to the 'Agni Purāṇa' and 'Rūpamaṇḍana' texts), as the 'cakra' and 'gadā' are placed on full-blown lotuses on the back right and back left hands respectively, while the front right and front left ones hold a lotus bud and a conch-shell; the snake hoods are absent; there are two tiny kneeling figures on the lower-most corners of the back-slab, whose identity is not quite clear from the plate; other iconographic features are the same as in the Surohor relief.<sup>2</sup> The dancing Śiva on the pedestal below the two images described above would tempt one to identify the miniature figure on the top as Brahmā; thus, the whole relief may present the Brahmanical triad, Brahmā—Viṣṇu—Śiva, and the snake hoods may be explained as those of Ādiśeṣa, one of the attendants of Viṣṇu; but Brahmā is very rarely represented as two-armed and one-faced and the hands are in a pose unusual in his case. It will be profitable to compare the above with certain twelve-

1. J. P. A. S. B., Vol. 23, 1932, pp. 193-4, Pl. IX. fig. 1.

2. N. G. Majumdar, 'A new type of Viṣṇu from North Bengal', 'Modern Review', February, 1929; Appendices to Annual Report of V. R. Society, Rajshahi, 1928-29, pp. 15-7 and plate. K. C. Sarkar suggested that this type really represented a Bodhisattva in his paper published in V. R. Society's Monograph, No. 4, pp. 18-23 and plate. Majumdar's suggestion is more acceptable.



armed standing images, generally in stone, which have been described by R. D. Banerjee as *Lokeśvara-Viṣṇu* images.<sup>1</sup> The much-mutilated twelve-armed figure originally found in Ghiyasabad, in the district of Murshidabad (Bengal) and now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, shows the central deity standing in the 'samapādasthānaka' pose, between two plantain trees with several snake hoods (probably seven) spread behind his head; of the twelve-hands a few are broken, while such attributes as are recognisable with difficulty, viz. *Garuḍa*, a rat, a ploughshare, a conch-shell (on the left hands), and a manuscript (?), a bull, a cup (?) etc. (on the right ones) are all placed on double-petalled lotuses or 'nīlotpalas' which are held by their stalks in the respective hands; the figure is decorated with the usual ornaments, a long garland reaching below the knee (the 'vanamālā' or 'vaijayantī' of the *Viṣṇu* images); one hand on either side is placed on two attendant figures just as two of some four armed *Viṣṇu* images are placed on the attendant *Āyudha-puruṣas*, though the figures on this relief can not be identified as such. A specimen exactly similar to the above type, now in the collection of the Rajshahi Museum, shows *Sūcīmukha*, one of the most common attendants of *Avalokiteśvara*, on its pedestal which is intact here. Unfortunately, the top sections of the 'prabhāvalī' with most of the head in both these reliefs are broken, and so it can not be determined whether the miniature *Dhyānī Buddha* was present there or not. A very interesting comparison can be made between these twelve-armed figures with a similar one hailing from Sonarang and now in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Museum, Calcutta. The latter is a well-preserved one and bears a great deal of affinity to the other two; besides, the figure of *Amitābha* is distinct over the snake-hood canopy; the attendant figures in this image can be recognised as *Āyudhapuruṣas*, as the 'cakra' on the head of the right hand figure is clearly discernible, while the emblem on the head of the other figure, which was probably a 'śaṅkha', is broken, and *Garuḍa* is shown on the right side of the 'triratha' pedestal with his hands in the 'añjali' pose. M. Ganguly remarks about the image,

1. R. D. Banerjee, 'The Eastern School of Mediaeval Sculpture in India', pp. 94-6, 125, pl. XXXVIII.



thus: 'The general features of the image seem to be derived from the ideal Viṣṇu image.... This form of Avalokiteśvara is very rare and as such this image has a unique value; a brief reference to the twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara is met with in 'Karaṇḍa Vyūha'.<sup>1</sup> The six-armed Sagardighi bronze figure, now in the collection of the same Museum described by Ganguly as Hṛṣīkeśa, a sub-variety of Viṣṇu, on insufficient data, represents a male deity standing under a canopy of seven three-headed Nāgas; the figure of Amitābha is absent on the top; the attributes of the image in the right hands are a staff surmounted by an elephant, a wheel, the front hand being in the 'varada' pose with the lotus mark on the palm, while a club, a conch shell and a long staff surmounted by a Garuḍa are placed on the left; the two right and left attendant figures are undoubtedly Padma and Cakra puruṣas because they hold lotuses with long stalks, on which are placed a lotus bud and a wheel respectively; the pedestal is ornamented in the centre with the representation of a lotus and shows the figure of the winged Garuḍa on the left side. The date of this sculpture can be fixed on the basis of an inscription at its back as well as on stylistic grounds in the 11th century A. D.<sup>2</sup> R. D. Banerjee observes about this group of images, 'This particular class of specimens, therefore, indicates a blending of the older Bhāgavata class of Vaiṣṇava images and the Lokeśvaras of the later Mahāyāna school of Vaiṣṇavism' (op. cit., p. 96). Reference ought to be made in this connection to the twenty-armed sculpture, exhibit No. 1492 in the Rajshahi Museum, which shows the deity clad with usual ornaments and 'vanamālā', standing erect on a 'saptaratha' pedestal with Garuḍa in its lower right corner and the donor couple and a pot with heaped offering ('naivedya') in the left, and artistic lotus stem and scroll carved on its middle face; his companions are two pot-bellied figures, with spiral 'jaṭā' on their heads, seated in 'lalitāsana' on 'viśvapadma', their left hands being in the 'vyākhyānamudrā' and the raised right hand

1. M. Ganguly, 'Handbook to the Sculptures in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Museum', pp. 32-3, Pl. VII. Ganguly was evidently unaware of the Ghiyasabad and Rajshahi counterparts of this image; he also did not notice the tiny figure of Garuḍa on the pedestal.

2. M. Ganguly, 'op. cit.', pp. 132-40, Pl. XXVI.



of the right figure holding a drawn sword, and the same of the left figure, a hammer with a long handle ; they have their own 'prabhās' carved behind their back and their attitude is distinctly reminiscent of the pose of Jālinī, Upakeśinī, Candraprabha and Sūryaprabha, the four miniature replicas and attendants of the Arapacana form of Mañjuśrī, whose textual descriptions and corresponding mediaeval icons are known ; the attributes in the ten right hands of the god are : (1) a broken globular object ( probably the lotus bud ), (2) lotus mark on the palm ( the hand being in the 'varada' ), (3) rosary, (4) elephant-goad, (5) assurance pose, (6) hammer, (7) longish thunder bolt, like double-edged trident, (8) drawn sword, (9) arrow and (10) mace, and in his left ones are the following : (1) a conch-shell, (2) a water-vessel, (3) a noose, (4) 'tarjjanī' ( the threatening pose ), (5) wheel, (6) circular shield, (7-10) indistinct or broken ; the main 'prabhāvalī' decorated with lotus petal design and a flat scroll one on its outer rim is broken at the top and it is not certain whether there were any figures like that of the Dhyāni-Buddha above. Here also we find an interesting amalgam of Buddhistic and Brahmanical features, the two gods which contributed to the composition being Viṣṇu and Mañjuśrī, belonging to the two rival creeds. One striking difference exists between this relief and the other four, six and twelve-armed composite icons just described, in respect of the manner of its holding the multifarious attributes in its hands,—these are not placed on lotuses as in the case of the others. I know of no texts which could fully explain the above group of images ; but a few couplets contained in the late compilation 'Rūpamaṇḍana' may be mentioned in this connection. The twelve-armed Ananta is described as of the form of Ananta ( i. e., the Śeṣanāga—that explains the seven hoods in the twelve and six-armed images ), endowed with unlimited divine power ( 'anantaśaktisamvitah' ), having a Garuḍa for his vehicle and endowed with four faces, holding mace, sword, wheel, thunderbolt, elephant goad and 'vara' in his right hands, and conch-shell, shield, bow, lotus, staff and noose in his left hands. The four-faced twenty-armed Viśvarūpa, on the other hand, will have a flag, a ploughshare, a conch shell, a thunderbolt, an elephant-goad, an arrow, a wheel, a citron and a boon, in the right hands, while the left ones will carry a flag, a staff, a noose, a mace, a sword, a lotus, a 'śṛṅgi'



( this should undoubtedly be 'śārṅga', i. e., the bow of Viṣṇu,—an arrow is in one of the right hands ), a pestle and a rosary ; the remaining two right and left hands should be in the 'yogamudrā' pose and the god should be depicted seated on Garuḍa ; his four faces ( as in the case of Vaikuṇṭhanātha ) should be shown as being that of a man, a man-lion, a woman and a boar.<sup>1</sup> But as will be seen after a comparison with the above texts and the images, the incidence of the number of hands—twelve and twenty in some of the reliefs, several of the attributes in them and a few other minor features can only be explained with the help of the former ; some major characteristics like the nature of the attendants are left unexplained and none of the above reliefs are four-faced. Again, the four and six-armed images in the group have no corresponding texts to explain them. These and similar other images, however, show definite and conscious efforts on the part of their makers and worshippers to rise above the well-defined limits of sectarianism and incorporate elements belonging to rival creeds.

In connection with the four-faced standing images of Viṣṇu, it must be observed that these are not at all unknown in northern India. In the extreme north, in Kashmir, it seems to have been the common mode of representing the god in the early mediæval period as is evidenced by the extant Avantipur specimens. But these are usually four-armed ; eight-armed similar images are also known in Kashmir, and these hail from temples earlier in point of date than the Avantipur ones. "The statues on the western walls of the ante-chamber in the Mārtaṇḍa temple ascribable to the great Kashmerian king Lalitāditya of the Karkoṭa dynasty, who ruled in the 7th century A. D., are those of Viṣṇu ; each one is three-faced like the Viṣṇu image in the Avantīsvāmin temple, the left being that of a boar and the right, that of a lion ; both are eight-armed, their lower hands being placed on the heads of 'chauri'-bearers, as in the other images of Viṣṇu found in the valley ; they both

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1. 'Rūpamaṇḍana', Calcutta Sanskrit Series, No. XII, p. 19. The verses here, as well as those quoted by Gopinath Rao from the same text are almost identical, the difference being slight and immaterial.



wear 'vana-mālā', the bust of the earth-goddess is discernible between the feet of one such figure on the north wall ; most of the hands are broken, so the emblems in them can not be identified". The above description is based on D. R. Shahni's account of the sculptures in 'A. S. I. A. R.', 1915-16, pp. 62-3 ; the images are really four-faced, the fourth one at the back could not be shown as they were relief-representations. Those figures which are in the round never fail to show the fourth head at the back. The fragmentary sculpture No. Aa 21 in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, has the front and side faces as in the above reliefs, the back face being that of a demon ; its mutilated condition does not enable us to be sure about the attributes in all the four hands, but the front right undoubtedly holds a lotus.<sup>1</sup> The beautiful sculpture, fully in the round, illustrated by R. C. Kak in page 50 and described by him in pages 49-51 of his 'Handbook', however, supplies us with all the necessary details that must have been present in the other sculpture when it was whole. The peaked tiara, the beautiful ornaments, the long garland described by Kak as 'mandāramālā', the 'ūrṇā' on the forehead, the 'śrīvatsa' mark on the breast are all tastefully displayed ; a lotus and a conch-shell are in the two front hands of the god, his two back hands resting on the Āyudhapuruṣas, the Gadādevī on the left and Cakrapuruṣa on the right ; a half-raised female figure shown between his legs represents Pṛthivī, thus, being strongly reminiscent of Buddha's 'mahābhiniṣkramaṇa' scene in Gandhāra. The central figure is not standing erect but is slightly 'dvibhaṅga', whereas, the attendant divinities are more bent in their poses ; the latter are not mere chaurie-bearers as D. R. Shahni and R. C. Kak describe them but are really personified representations of attributes, though they are holding yak-tails with long handles in their right hands. An image of this type originally hailing from Mathura and now in the collection of the local museum ( 2525 ) shows the lion face on the right and boar one on the left ; in artistic decoration it resembles the fragmentary sculpture of the four-armed Viṣṇu

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1. R. C. Kak, 'Handbook of the Archaeological and Numismatic Sections of the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, p. 49, fig. Aa 21.



noticed above. Coomaraswamy published the bust of one such Viṣṇu which he procured from Mathura for the Boston Museum and thus remarked about it: 'The figure exhibits the broad shoulders and slender "lion" waist of the Indian ideal type, with the firmness and fulness of flesh and massive modelling characteristic of the Gupta period; it is an important document equally of art and iconography'.<sup>1</sup> These sculptures are usually shown as three-faced on account of their relievo-character. When they are fully in the round, like many such Kashmerian images, the fourth face, that of a demon very often appears at the back. B. C. Bhattacharya discovered a specimen of the four-faced images of the standing Viṣṇu at Benares. It is very much mutilated; the four faces are, however, quite in tact, all its hands and the portion below the waist being broken. The front face is human, placid in aspect, while the right and left faces are that of Narasiṃha and Varāha, the back face being horrid-looking with round protruding eyes, lolling tongue, 'jaṭās' over the head, etc.<sup>2</sup> Bhattacharya has rightly drawn our attention to the iconographic text as compiled by Hemādri from 'Viṣṇudharmottara', which would partially explain this type of image; it says that "Viṣṇu, the god of the gods, should be shown on Garuḍa; he should have four faces and eight hands; the eastern face will be placid in form, the southern one that of Narasiṃha and the western (i. e., the back face) should be 'Kapila' and the other face i. e., the northern or left one should be of Varāha'. It should be noted that a text similar to the above must have been followed in the carving of the Kashmerian four-faced images of Viṣṇu, as it is expressly mentioned by Kak that the back face is demoniacal in character.<sup>3</sup>

1. 'Bulletin of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts', Dec., 1919, No. 104, pp. 60-2, 'Gupta torso of Viṣṇu'.

2. B. C. Bhattacharya, 'Indian Images', Part I, p. 8, Plate IV. The above image is now in the collection of N. M. Ray Chaudhury of Rungpur; V. R. S. Monograph, No. 4, pp. 80-81, and plate.

3. The 'Viṣṇudharmottara', III. 44, 9-13 reads: 'Devadevaṃ tathā Viṣṇuṃ kārāyēdgaruḍasthitam || Kaustubhodbhāsitorāṣkaṃ sarvābharapadhāriṇam | Sa jalāmbudāracchāyāṃ pītadivyāmbaram tathā || Mukhāśca kār्याścatvāro bhāvo dvigunāstathā | Saumyaṃ tu vadanam pūrvam nārasimham tu dakṣiṇam || Kāpilam paścimam vaktram tathā vārāhamuttaram'. The above is taken from the Venkatesvara Press edition. Gopinath Rao puts the same with slight alteration: 'saumyaṃ tu' is changed into 'saumyendu' and 'kāpila' into 'kapila'. As regards the objects to be placed in the hands of such an image, the same 'Purāṇa' (Venkatesvara press) tells us: 'Tasya dakṣiṇahasteṣu bhāṇāṣṇamusalā-



The Mārtaṇḍa temple specimens are eight-armed, but the objects in the hands are indistinguishable; the Avantipur images are four-armed and the Benares specimen also seems to have been so.

The seated (‘āsana’) varieties of Viṣṇu images are not so numerous in the north of India as the standing ones just described. The Āsanamūrtis of Viṣṇu, again, can be subdivided into several varieties, according as they are depicted seated on the coils of Ādiśeṣa in the ‘lalitāsana’ pose, or on the shoulders of Garuḍa in different ways, sometimes singly or at other times along with his consort Lakṣmī, or again in some yogic ‘āsana’ such as ‘padmāsana’ on a double-petalled lotus. The earliest seated image belonging to the north of India, so far known to me, is the relief shown on the central part of the principal architrave in the main sanctum of the Deogarh temple, belonging to the Gupta period; it has been briefly referred to above. The right one of the two attendant goddesses, seated below is shampooing the leg of the deity dangling down the coils of the snake; there is another attendant figure just behind her; the objects in the hands of the god are not quite clear; he wears a square ‘kirīṭa’ and the seven hoods of the snake are spread canopy-wise over his head; the host of the garland-bearing Vidyādhara, singly or in couples are shown above flying towards him in a row from either side. The whole composition is very graceful and shows the characteristic vigour of the Gupta art.<sup>1</sup> This form of Viṣṇu seems to have been the prototype of the variety

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dayaḥ || Carma cīraṇi dhanuścendracāpeṣu Vanamālīnaḥ; there is some mistake here. The ‘Caturvargacintāmaṇi’ (Bibliotheca Indica Edition), Vratākhaṇḍa, Part I, pp. 110-1, quoting from ‘Viṣṇudharmottara’, puts the above two lines thus: ‘Tasya dakṣiṇahasteṣu bālārkaṃśaśābhayaḥ | Carmaśīparāvīndu vāme ca Vanamālīnaḥ’; both these versions require correction; the first is more corrupt of the two. If in the second version, ‘bāpārka’ (Rao puts it as ‘bāpāri’ and adds that the ‘Vācaspatya’ explains ‘ari’ as ‘cakram’) is read in place of ‘bālārka’, then the right hands are made to hold an arrow, a solar wheel, a pestle, the fourth being in the ‘abhaya’ pose; the left ones, on the other hand, show a shield (‘carma’), a ploughshare (‘śīra’), a conch-shell (‘īndu’) and the ‘varadamudrā’. This is certainly a much better reading than the one given in the Venkatesvara press edition of the ‘Viṣṇudharmottara’. Most of these attributes are found in the twelve or twenty-armed images noticed above, but I know of no such four-faced image where the hands are well-preserved and which carry the above attributes. The Boston Museum specimen described by Coomaraswamy in the Sculpture Catalogue is also fragmentary. I do not see why Bhattacharya would call this type of Viṣṇu image ‘Sādhāraṇa-Viṣṇu’; neither Hemadri nor the source from which he quotes names it so.

1. Cunningham, ‘A. S. R.’, Vol. X, Pl. XXXVI.



of Vaiṣṇava images described as Ādimūrti in the 'Vaikhānasāgama' text. It enjoins that the god should be shown seated on the coils of Ananta (Ādiśeṣa), his right leg extended and the left one drawn up, right hand resting on the coil of the serpent (in the Gupta relief, the right hand is raised upwards), while the left spread over the left knee, the back hands carrying a conch shell and a wheel, his head shaded by five or seven hoods of the snake ;.....Bhṛgu and Mārkaṇḍeya kneeling on one knee should be shown on his right and left sides, where also Brahmā and Śiva should be placed (these male attendants generally appear in South Indian Viṣṇu reliefs, which are of yogic variety according to the same text).<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest of the Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu images is the very unique sculpture in greyish black stone, about 6' 4" in height, which was found near Laksmanakati, Dist. Backerganj, Bengal. It is one of the most interesting types of Āsanamūrti of Viṣṇu, no other such specimen having ever been discovered anywhere in India, and is remarkable from the point of view of its artistic excellence and its iconographic importance. Viṣṇu is lightly seated in the 'lalitāsana' pose on the outstretched wings of a three-headed Garuḍa who is shown as about to soar upwards; the back right and back left hands hold two lotus flowers by their stalks, on the pericarps of which are depicted miniature seated figures of Kamalā (Gaja Lakṣmī), and Sarasvatī playing on an antique shaped harp, respectively; the right and left front hands of the deity hold a 'cakra' (with the Cakrapuruṣa inside it) and the miniature figure of the Gadādevī; on a squarish 'kiriṭamakuṭa' is shown a four-armed deity seated with its front hands in the 'dhyāna' or 'yoga mudrā' and the back hands carrying some indistinct objects, possibly two of the attributes of Viṣṇu (it may then stand for Yogāsana Viṣṇu); on the top and bottom sections of the stele appear the flying Vidyādhara and the donor couple respectively; the central figure is tastefully decorated with 'vanamālā' and other usual ornaments. The severe simplicity of the whole composition, the squarish makuta, the plainness of the 'prabhāvalī' all enable one to date it some time in the 8th-9th century A. D., which will certainly not be too early.<sup>2</sup> But what is to be studied

1. T. A. G. Rao, 'op. cit.', Vol. I, Part I, pp. 261-2, Pl. LXXVIII, Part II, App. C, p. 61.

2. N. K. Bhattasali, 'Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum', pp. 86-7, Pl. XXXII.



with care in this specimen of religious art is its unique iconographic shape which can not be explained with the help of any known text. It is an uncommon thing in Viṣṇu images to place Śrī and Puṣṭi in the back hands of the central figure; again, the manner of its holding them reminds us of the four-, six-, and twelve-armed standing images of Viṣṇu noted above.<sup>1</sup> The Dhyānī-Buddha like miniature figure on its crown is also strongly reminiscent of the same in the Kalandarpur, Surohor and other reliefs; but here the figure is four-armed and thus may be explained as the original 'prakṛti' of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu as mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the 'Mahābhārata'.<sup>2</sup> The massive stone image of Viṣṇu seated astride on the shoulders of Garuḍa, originally hailing from Bihar and now housed in the Gupta gallery of the Indian Museum is a very striking example of another variety of the Garuḍāsana images. The pose is natural, and the whole composition can be dated in the early mediaeval period. The 12th century A. D. image of Viṣṇu seated in the 'lalitāsana' on the back of Garuḍa as in the Lakṣmanakati sculpture, found at Deora in the district of Bogra, Bengal, and now in the Rajshahi Museum, shows the same abnormal pose (this was adopted in some Indonesian reliefs as is evidenced by the Candi Belahan sculpture depicting the same motif, which is supposed to portray the figure of the Javanese King Erlaṅga); in this relief, however, Viṣṇu and his mount though carved out of the same slab of stone appear as two separate images combined. Many<sup>3</sup> sculptures of the early and late mediaeval periods have been found in Northern India, which portray both these types of Garuḍāsana images. There are other reliefs where Viṣṇu is shown seated in the abnormal pose on the back of his mount with his consort Lakṣmī seated on his left thigh. The Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa relief at Basta near Dacca is a late specimen of such a variety, where one leg of each of the couple is made to rest on the back hands of Garuḍa, the front hands of the latter

1. R. D. Banerjee remarked about this manner of placing the attributes, that 'this peculiar arrangement seems to have been common in the northern part of Rājha (op. cit., p. 96). The Lakṣmanakati, Surohor, Kalandarpur and other images prove that this mode was also known in eastern and northern Bengal i. e., Vaṅga and Varendra.

2. Banerjee, 'D. H. I', p. 87.

3. R. D. Banerjee, op. cit., p. 128, Pl. XLIV (b).



being shown in the 'añjali' pose.<sup>1</sup> In other varieties of the same motif, Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu are shown seated on a 'viśvapadma', and the Eshnail sculpture depicting the above type, in the collection of the Rajshahi Museum, is interesting. These groups of seated Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images, however, bear a strong resemblance to the Umā-Maheśvara sculptures, numbers of which have been found in northern and eastern India, and seem to have been based on the latter.

It will be useful here to refer to two beautifully carved seated images of Viṣṇu in the collection of Mathura Museum; these are of unique interest from the iconographic as well as artistic point of view. The sculpture No. D. 37 of buff coloured sandstone, shows the god seated in 'vaddhapadmāsana' with his front hands in the 'yogamudrā', his back right and left hands carrying 'gadā' and 'cakra' respectively; there is a square 'kirīṭa' on his head, and the other usual ornaments, the 'vanamālā' and the sacred thread are accurately displayed; just beneath the drooping petals of the lotus on which the god is seated and on the front face of the 'pañcaratha' pedestal is shown a female figure sitting in the same pose as the central deity (she is probably to be identified as the earth goddess), flanked on either side by a Nāga couple and a female figure kneeling with their hands in the 'añjali' pose; on the second parallel layer of the pedestal are shown one on either side two male figures standing in graceful pose who are the Cakra and Śaṅkha puruṣas, as they hold a wheel and a conch-shell respectively in their hands; on the last parallel layer of the 'pīṭhikā', are shown a female figure holding a lotus (evidently Gadādevī, for the knob of 'Gadā' above her head is distinctly recognisable in the relief) on the proper right and a male figure holding a cobra on the proper left (the last is none other than Garuḍa who is known as 'Phaṇiphaṇabhṛt'); on the middle part of the backslab is shown the Gajavyāla, one on either side, and over them are the river-goddesses; on the top section of the relief are displayed three miniature shrines, one on the centre just above the head of the central figure and two others, one on each side of it; these contain the seated figures of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva,

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1. N. K. Bhattasali, 'op. cit.', p. 88, Pl. XXXIV.



Viṣṇu occupying the central shrine, Brahmā and Śiva, the proper right and proper left ones respectively. Each of these figures is four-armed and holds his usual attributes ; on both sides of the central chapel there are flying Vidyādhara couples carrying garlands and flowers in their hands.<sup>1</sup> The whole composition, very full in details, is exceedingly well-carved and the careful and methodical grouping of the accessories in relation to the central deity is praiseworthy. This belongs to the early mediaeval period and is an excellent specimen of the handiwork of the Mathuran artists. Another Yogāsanamūrti in the collection of the same Museum ( Registered number, 379 ) and of the same period, though not containing so many details and somewhat inferior in artistic merit to the other, is iconographically interesting. The 'Vanamālā' is shown in a peculiar way, gracefully carved round the upper arms and disappearing behind the back, it is spread below the legs on the lotus-seat ; there are lotus marks on the hand and feet of the god as in the other figure, and the sitting pose, various ornaments, the attributes in the back hands and the 'yogamudrā' in the front ones are exactly similar to the above image ; on the top proper right and left corners of the square stele are shown Brahmā and Śiva seated, but not inside shrines ; no other figures are carved on it ; below the drooping petals of the lotus on which the god is seated is a conch-shell, placed sideways in place of the earth-goddess ; the couple of female figures in the lower left corner of the pedestal, the first of which holds a lotus with a long stalk can not be the donors, for their hands are not in the 'añjali' pose—they might represent the two consorts of Viṣṇu. Garuḍa with his raised right hand supports the right corner of the lotus seat ; the pedestal is plain without any facets. These two sculptures show that the Yogāsana images of Viṣṇu were not unknown in the north. A very interesting sculpture, in the collection of the Khajuraho Museum ought to be taken note of in this connection. Kramrisch was the first to notice it, and her description of the figure is as follows : "Viṣṇu is shown with the fore-finger of his main left hand raised to the height of the lips, a gesture not recorded

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1. J. PH. Vogel, 'Mathura Museum Catalogue', pp. 102-03. Vogel described it as "the four-armed Viṣṇu apparently in the Buddha 'avatāra'" ; but now we can justifiably name the figure as Yogāsana Viṣṇu wearing profuse ornaments.



in any of the varieties of the Viṣṇu image, nor am I aware of any literary reference to the hand raised as if indicating silence, as if Viṣṇu were shown as 'maunavratin'. There are the usual accompanying figures, relatively large figures of donors with 'añjali mudrā' to either side of the pedestal, and Garuḍa in its centre. The lotus scroll consists in Candella ornamentation mainly of stalks in full relief (contrast the version in Pāla-Sena sculpture), either smooth, or knotty in more detailed examples".<sup>1</sup> If the Khajuraho relief is studied along with the two Mathura Museum sculptures noticed above by me, one can not but be struck with the great similarity between them as regards the facial expression, the ornaments and the general pose of the body, and it appears that all three were the handiwork of the same school of sculptors. The pose of the front left hand of the last is unusual, reminding one of that of the right hand of the bronze statuette discovered by Marshall at Sirkap and identified by him as the child-god Harpocrates ( 'A Guide to Taxila', 2nd edition, p. 79, pl. XV ). T. A. G. Rao reproduces only one sculpture, viz. that from Bagali in the Bellary district of the Madras Presidency in illustration of Yogāsana Viṣṇu and a glance at his plate ( XXIV, Vol. I, Part I ) shows the difference in style and execution. Like in the second Mathura relief, the accessory figures are not many, but the features present in the north Indian relief are not to be found here; an additional feature found in the Bagali sculpture is the figures of the ten incarnations, most of them seated in the Yogāsana pose in imitation of the central figure. Rao explains this abnormal way of showing the 'avatāras' by observing that it is conventional to show the surrounding figures in the same pose, in which the central one is shown; but this convention, if there was any, is seldom observed in both the north and south Indian reliefs.<sup>2</sup> This type of the seated image of Viṣṇu, however, is extremely rare in eastern India and I can only refer to one or two specimens hailing from Bengal. A black basalt pedestal of an image found by S. K. Saraswati at Itahar, Dinajpur,

1. J. I. S. O. A., Vol. I, pp. 99-100 and 103 and Pl. XXX.

2. Rao, op. cit., Vol. I, Pt. I, pp. 103-04; his reference to Dattātreyā figure from Badami reproduced by him in Plate LXXIII is not happy, for of the ten 'avatāras' there, the three Rāma ones ( Jāmadagnya, Rāghava and Balarāma ) are shown standing and Kalkin is as usual on horse back.



contains the lower portion of a seated divinity identifiable as Yogāsana Viṣṇu from its front hands being shown in the yogamudrā and the presence of Garuḍa below on the pedestal.<sup>1</sup> A fine large bracket capital of wood found at Sonarang, Dacca, contains a representation of the same variety of Viṣṇu image; it is a very good specimen of the wood carver's art and can be dated in circa 11th century A. D.<sup>2</sup> On one of the terracotta plaques of the main shrine at Paharpur we find another figure of Viṣṇu seated; but the deity is in 'sukhāsana' and not 'yogāsana' as K. N. Dikshit suggests.<sup>3</sup>

If the Āsanamūrtis of Viṣṇu are rare in comparison with the Sthānaka images of the god, the Śāyanamūrtis are rarer still in the north and east of India. It has already been pointed out how the latter is one of the types of Viṣṇu images most frequently enshrined as Raṅganātha in the main sanctum of the Vaiṣṇava temples of the South and how it portrays the Nārāyaṇa element in the composite Vaiṣṇavism, the latter itself being based on the Vedic ideology regarding creation. In the epic and Purāṇic period, the mythology is no doubt much more developed, but the principal idea is the same. The type which illustrates this elaborate myth, visualises the state of 'pralaya' (dissolution) in which the nucleus of creation lies latent in the One alone, from whom, again, creation takes place; we are also told in the Purāṇas that the earth (medinī) was made out of the fat ('meda') of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha who were slain by Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. The earliest north-Indian stone relief depicting the same concept, so far known to me, is the Deogarh one already mentioned. But, a still earlier terracotta plaque, originally decorating the Bhitargaon (Cawnpore, U. P.) temple of the 5th century A. D., and now an exhibit

1. J. R. A. S. B., Letters, 1936, pp 10-11, Pl. 1, fig. 1. This 12th century A. D. ornate pedestal is iconographically interesting as it bears not only the figure of Garuḍa but also an elephant and a fat, squat figure; Nāga and Nāginī (Ādiśeṣa and his consort) support with their raised hands the lower set of petals of the 'mahāmūḍra', reminding us of the Nāga pair raising the lotus of Buddha in the representation of the Great Miracle of Srāvastī.

2. R. D. Banerjee, op. cit., pp. 109, 124, Pl. XLV (a).

3. K. N. Dikshit. M. A. S. I., No. 55, p. 59, Pl. XLII(d)5. Dikshit refers to another seated Viṣṇu carved on the hillside at Gauhati, Assam, but his remarks about the uniqueness of the seated Viṣṇu type at Paharpur require modification.



in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, summarily depicts the same motif. The god is shown resting on the coils of Ādiśeṣa, whose hoods are spread over his head, in an half-raised attitude; a lotus stalk issues out of his navel (Padmanābha) on whose blossom is seated Brahmā (Padmayoni); one leg of the god is drawn up on which one of his hands rests and the other leg is shown stretched forward; near the legs are shown the two figures of the demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, in a militant attitude (elaborate mythology in the epic and Purāṇic literature shows their connection with Nārāyaṇa). The Deogarh stone relief gives a much more elaborate version of the motif; the whole rectangular relief is divided into two unequal sections, the upper larger one contains the figure of the deity recumbent on the coils of the snake; the hoods of the latter shelter his head, which, slightly raised, rests on his front left hand; the other hands without any attributes are at ease; the 'vanamālā' and other usual ornaments decorate his body; Lakṣmī is shampooing his right leg which is slightly bent (I have shown that this feature is present also in the seated figure of Viṣṇu in the central part of the lintel of the same shrine); one male and the other female standing side by side near the god's leg may stand for the Āyudhapuruṣas (the female figure holding a club with a knob may stand for Gadādevī, the identity of the male one being not certain; Rao thinks that it may represent Dhanus, but the suggestion is not beyond doubt); on the top centre of this section is the three-headed but two-armed Brahmā seated on a lotus, the stalk of which issues from a jar-like object shown near the right hand of the god (the lotus does not issue from the navel, as Rao describes and as is quite clear in the Bhitargaon terracotta plaque); on the proper right of Brahmā are shown Indra on his elephant and Kārttikeya on his peacock, and on his proper left Śiva and Pārvatī on the bull, and a sword and shield bearing Vidyādhara (the mounts of the respective deities, and the Vidyādhara are all shown as flying through the air). On the lower section of the panel is a row of six figures—the one in the extreme right corner is female, the others being male; the two male figures in the extreme left corner carrying clubs and shown in fighting mood probably represent the two demons and the figure next to them in a vigorous pose drawing a sword from its scabbard may depict one of the Āyudhapuruṣas, the two male and one female figure also probably represent



them (in that case, the last may be Gadādevī); it is to be noted that in the hands of the main figure, no weapons or attributes are placed, and these may well be personified here in actual combat with the demons. The whole composition is exceedingly well carved and does credit to the anonymous Gupta artist who could so beautifully illustrate in plastic form the concept centering round Śeṣaśāyī Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu. Smith very ingeniously compares the general pose of the central figure with that of the Greek Endymion, a copy of which enriches the collection of the Stockholm Museum, and utilises the resemblance as one of the proofs substantiating his theory about the indebtedness of the Gupta artists to the Graeco-Roman art. But in this case, the similarity might be a case of coincidence, and in any case it has been shown by me that the whole concept underlying the motif is based on old Indian ideology.<sup>1</sup> A parallelism, in this way, may more appositely be seen between this and the representation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa scene in Gandhāran and later art; but here also the partial similarity of the two compositions is superficial, and no far-reaching conclusions can be drawn on its basis. T. A. G. Rao refers to another relief depicting the same theme, which belongs to Rajputana. The composition partially resembles the above but contains many more figures which have been identified by Rao as being those of Sanaka, Sanatkumāra, the Saptarṣis and the five Āyudhapuruṣas; below the cot on which Viṣṇu is lying on Ādiśeṣa are seen a number of figures engaged in fighting. This scene depicts perhaps the fight between the 'devas' and the 'asuras'.<sup>2</sup>

A brief resumé of the different modes of iconographic presentation of the principal Viṣṇu types in the north and south of India will not be out of the place here. We have seen that the 'Vaikhānasāgama' classification seems to have been followed to a certain extent in carving Viṣṇu images

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1. T. A. G. Rao does not agree with Smith in placing it in the first half of the 6th century A. D., and dates it about two centuries later; but Smith is undoubtedly correct. For Smith's comparison of this relief with Endymion, cf. O. Z. 1914, p. 25 and figs. 17 and 18.

2. T. A. G. Rao, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 114-15, Pl. XXXIV. For a fragmentary relief containing the same subject in the collection of N. M. Ray Chaudhury, Zemindar of Tapa, at his house at Rungpur, see V. R. S. Monograph, No. 4, July, 1930, P. 311, Tapa Collection, Rungpur, fig. 4.



in the south, the extant specimens, however, chiefly belonging to the 'yoga' and 'bhoga' varieties; in the north, as regards the Sthānakamūrtis of Viṣṇu, there is not enough evidence to show whether this distinction was ever adopted—the probable Abhicārikasthānakamūrti from Burdwan, Bengal, being a solitary exception; the standing images almost invariably belong to the 'bhoga' variety. The four-faced standing images of Viṣṇu seem to have been very popular in the extreme north of India, though such types were not unknown in central and eastern India. Four and possibly eight-armed such images go back to the Kushana period and such sculptures have been discovered at Mathura. From the Gupta period onwards, a regular development in the iconography of such images of Viṣṇu can be observed. As regards the seated images, a few reliefs from northern, central and eastern India, seem to prove that different varieties of them, though not as numerous as the standing ones, were known in these regions—a group of them being describable with some justification as the Yogāsana form of the the god. 'Śayana' images are, however, uncommon. But whatever may be the form of the images, there can not be the least doubt that they try to symbolise one or other aspect of the composite god, thus emphasising the various traits underlying it; the wheel and lotus mark in the hands and the Garuḍa mount as unmistakably point to the solar basis of the cult-picture, as the recumbent form on the coils of the Nāga in the midst of the primeval waters illustrates its Nārāyaṇa form. In the next chapter we shall see how in the Vyūha images of the god, the Vāsudeva element was emphasised.



## II

VYŪHAS AND VIBHAVAS OF  
VIṢṆU

A general idea about the principal types of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu images has been given by me in the preceding chapter ; to speak in terms of Pāñcarātra theology these illustrate the 'Para' or the highest aspect of the god. A distinction was made by Gopinath Rao between Para-Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu images ; but in the principal image of the fully-developed cult wherein all the three elements, Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa, have been merged, it would be futile to distinguish between Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva forms, for the simple reason that they have become one for all practical purposes. If we differentiate between the two, then for consistency's sake we shall have to separate the Śeṣaśayana images from the others and describe them exclusively as Nārāyaṇa. The texts themselves are not quite explicit in this matter, but they indirectly support my hypothesis. I have already drawn attention to the 'Matsya Purāṇa' passage in the last chapter, which alternately uses the terms Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva to refer to the descriptions of the same type of images. The 'Viṣṇudharmottara' ( Book III ), gives an elaborate description of Vāsudeva icons in verses 2-14 of chapter 85 ( Venkatesvara Press ) ; in verses 16-20, an explanation is given of the real nature of the attributes in the hands of the god ; verses 21 to 26 describe the images of Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha ; then in 29-37 are incorporated the names and real nature of the eight attendants of the four above-mentioned deities ; lastly the eight devagaṇas ( viz. 'animā', 'laghimā', 'mahimā', 'prāpti', 'prākāmya', 'īṣitva', 'vaśitva', and 'kā māvasāyitā',—the eight yogic 'siddhis', the attainment of which is the desire of every yogin ) are associated in batches of two with each of the four gods in verses 39-41. Then Mārkaṇḍeya tells Vajra that 'what has been narrated to him is the Caturmūrti of the lord ; but if the four are combined into one, the composite image should be called Vaikuṇṭha, and it should be four-faced—by making the god four-faced the one god becomes four-formed ; the eastern ( i. e., central because the deity faces east ) face, the most important of the four, should be placid in aspect ; the right face of the lustre ( form ) of a lion should typify



knowledge ; the western face should be terrific which is called ( typifies ) prosperity ; another form of the four-faced ( image of the lord ) is to be made as I have expounded'.<sup>1</sup> The above passage is very interesting ; in the last chapter I have discussed another description of the four-faced image of Viṣṇu as given in the same Purāṇa ( Bk. III, ch. 44, verses 9-13 ). Through some mistake or inadvertence, the Varāha face is not explicitly mentioned here and the back face is named 'raudra' in place of 'kāpila' ( or 'kapila' ). But there can be very little doubt that both descriptions fit in the case of the same types of images, as regards the number of the faces ; in the case of the present text the god is named Vaikuṇṭhacaturmūrti who is four-armed, while in the case of the other the deity is Viṣṇu, one of the triad ( Trimūrti—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva ), but the number of his hands is given as eight. Again, in the same work ( Book III, ch. 47, verses 2-17 ), while the Kṛṣṇa form ( evidently Vāsudeva form ) of the Lord is being described just after the description of the image of Brahmā, the real nature of his four faces, eight hands, 'vanamālā', Garuḍa and other accessories is explained, and it is expressly mentioned that 'the four faces of the God of gods are to be known ( to typify ) 'bala', 'jñāna', 'aiśvarya' and 'śakti' respectively associated with Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha ! Lastly, after a few other observations regarding the real significance of the attributes of the eight hands, each two of which are associated with each one of the four forms, the Purāṇakāra says that 'with such a body, the God, the greatest in the universe, sustains the whole world' ; the whole chapter is named as Viṣṇurūpanirmāṇa. All these details fully prove that there can not be any justification in distinguishing between Para-Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu images as Gopinath Rao and following him several others have done, and it would be hardly correct to separate Kṛṣṇaism from Vaiṣṇavism as has been done by K. N. Dikshit when he observes in connection with the Paharpur reliefs that 'a large number of

1. 'Viṣṇudharmottara', Bk. III, ch. 35, verses 42-45 : 'Etatko rūpanirmāṇaṃ caturmūrtermayeritam | Ekamūrtidharaḥ kṛya Vaikuṇṭhetyabhiśabditaḥ || Caturmukhaḥ sa kartavyaḥ prāgukta vādanaḥ prabhūḥ | Caturmūrtiḥ sa bhavati kṛte mukhacatuṣṭaye || Pūrvam saumyamukhaṃ kṛyam yattu amukhyatamaṃ viduḥ | Kartavyaṃ saṃbhavakṛtrābhaṃ jñānavaktraṃ tu dakṣiṇam || Pāścīmaṃ vādanaṃ raudraṃ yattadaiśvaryamuçyate | Caturvaktrasya kartavyaṃ rūpamanyattatheritam ||'



these reliefs pertains to the Kṛṣṇa cult which apparently loses its force in the Pāla period when the worship of Viṣṇu was at its highest in Bengal' (op. cit., p. 37). What is still more interesting in connection with the 'Viṣṇudharmottara' passages referred to above is that they collectively help one to explain the four-faced, four-armed (sometimes eight-armed) images of Viṣṇu so frequently found in Kashmir, noticed by me in the previous chapter. A comparison of the text (Bk. III, ch. 85, verses 2-14 and 42-45) with the four-armed images of this nature will show that most of the details of the latter can be explained with its aid, and it is not at all surprising that in Kashmir which was probably the original homeland of many of the authoritative Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, the Pāñcarātra element in the composite Viṣṇu image should predominate.

It will be quite apposite here to take note of one of the essential doctrinal tenets of the Pāñcarātra system in connection with the Vāsudeva Caturmūrti and Caturvaktra Viṣṇu; unless we know something about it, it will be impossible for us to understand the true significance of the images of the great god Vāsudeva Viṣṇu conceived in his four primary aspects viz. Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha and his twenty other secondary ones—making up twenty-four forms in all (Caturviṃśati-mūrttayāḥ). The philosophy of the Pāñcarātrins, like that of the various other religious systems, is inseparably bound up with the story of creation. The creation, according to them, takes place in gradual stages; in the beginning Śrī, the great Śakti of Viṣṇu opens her eyes by his command ('unmeṣa') and flashes up in her dual aspect of 'kriyā' (acting) and 'bhūti' (becoming), i. e., Force and Matter. Viṣṇu, the transcendent Lord, himself inactive, indirectly acts through his consort in her two aspects and thus Viṣṇu, Kriyā Śakti (really the Sudarśana portion of Lakṣmī) and Bhūti Śakti are respectively the 'causa efficiens' (efficient cause), 'causa instrumentalis' (instrumental cause) and 'causa materialis' (material cause) of the world. Thus, in the Pāñcarātra system, the transcendent aspect of Viṣṇu remains completely in the background, but still the motive force, while the one force (Lakṣmī) which as Bhūti appears as the universe, vitalises and governs it as Kriyā. The first phase of the manifestation of Lakṣmī is called 'śuddhasṛṣṭi' (pure creation) which consists of the creation of the six ideal 'guṇas' ('guṇonmeṣadaśā').



These 'guṇas', the attributes of the highest god, are 'jñāna' ( knowledge ), 'aiśvarya' ( lordship ), 'śakti' ( potency ), 'bala' ( strength ), 'vīrya' ( virility ) and 'tejas' ( splendour ), and are themselves 'aprākṛta' ( not belonging to Prakṛti ), like the three 'guṇas'—'sattva', 'rajas' and 'tamas' ; they in their totality and by pairs are the material or instruments of Pure Creation. The first three of them connected with the Bhūti fall under one group called 'viśramabhūmayah' ( stages of rest ), while the last three under the other, viz. 'śramabhūmayah' ( stages of effort ), and the corresponding 'guṇas' of each group join to form a pair associated with one or other of some special divine manifestation. In their totality the 'guṇas' make up the body of Vāsudeva, the highest personal god ( 'Śāḍguṇyavigrahaṁ devaṁ ), as well as that of his consort Lakṣmī. When, however, they begin to pair—one of the first group pairing with another of the second—, begins that process of manifestation, which appears as a chain, as it were, consisting of several manifestations,—each one excepting the first originating from an anterior one ; thus, the favourite image of the process has, with the Pāñcarātrins, become that of one flame proceeding from another flame ( any creation, up to the formation of the Brahmāṇḍa, is imagined as taking place in this way ). The first three or including Vāsudeva, four, beings thus coming into existence are called the Vyūhas which term really denotes that the six 'guṇas' are shoved asunder into three pairs ; and the Caturvyūhas ( cf. the Caturmūrti of the 'Viṣṇudharmottara' passage ) are Vāsudeva ( in whom all the six 'guṇas' are equally manifest ), Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, the last three being the elder brother, the son and grandson respectively of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa according to the epic and purāṇic tradition. The pairs of 'guṇas' that are connected with the three latter are 'jñāna' and 'bala', 'aiśvarya' and 'vīrya', and 'śakti' and 'tejas' respectively ; it is however, expressly laid down in the texts that each Vyūha is Viṣṇu himself with his six 'guṇas' of which two only become manifest in each case. Thus appear the four original Vyūhas from each of which descend or emanate three sub-Vyūhas ( 'Vyūhāntara mūrtyantara' ) in this way :—(1) from Vāsudeva : Keśava, Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava ; (2) from Saṁkarṣaṇa : Govinda, Viṣṇu and Madhusūdana ; (3) from Pradyumna : Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara ; and (4) from Aniruddha : Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara. Another set of twelve Vidyēśvaras ( this



term is used in the 'Mahāsanatkumāra Saṃhitā', III, 6,34 ) emanate from the four principal Vyūhas in the following manner as given in the 'Pādma Tantra' ( I, 2,26 ) : from the Vyūha Vāsudeva springs another Vāsudeva, from the latter Puruṣottama and from him Janārdana ; similarly from Saṃkarṣaṇa, another Saṃkarṣaṇa, Adhokṣaja and Upendra ; from Pradyumna, another Pradyumna, thence Nṛsiṃha from whom Hari ; and lastly from Aniruddha a second Aniruddha, Acyuta and Kṛṣṇa. These twelve Vidyēśvaras are enumerated after the twelve sub-Vyūhas and are called together with the latter, "the twenty-four forms" ( caturvīṃśati mūrtayaḥ ) of Viṣṇu.<sup>1</sup>

The aforesaid account of the emanatory forms of the one god explains some of the terms used in the 'Viṣṇudharmottara' passages about the four-faced Viṣṇu images ; thus, the four faces are said to stand for four principal Vyūhas each typifying one or other among the four of the six ideal 'guṇas', viz. 'bala', 'jñāna', 'aiśvarya' and 'śakti' ( 'balaṃ jñānaṃ tathaiśvaryaṃ śaktiśca Yadunandana | vijñeyaṃ devadevasya tasya vaktraṃ catuṣṭayam || Vāsudevaśca bhagavāṃstathā Saṃkarṣaṇaḥ prabhuḥ | Pradyumnaścāniruddhaśca balādyāḥ parikīrtitāḥ' || ; Bk. III, Ch. 47, verses 9-10). It may also be observed that in the Pāñcarātra texts as well as in the 'Viṣṇudharmottara', the allocation of the four faces is done in this manner : the front or the eastern face is that of Vāsudeva, the right or the southern face ( lion ) that of Saṃkarṣaṇa, the left or the northern one ( boar ) that of Pradyumna, and the back or the western one ( 'Kāpila' or 'raudra'—the terrific ) that of Aniruddha. The lion and the boar faces are thus primarily associated with the Pāñcarātra Vyūhas and not with the Nṛsiṃha and Varāha incarnations, though the ideology of the latter might have been to some extent responsible for this concept ; it is curious that Saṃkarṣaṇa, in whom 'jñāna' is particularly manifest and

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1. The above particulars about the Vyūhas and the Caturvīṃśatimūrtis of Viṣṇu is summarised from the lucid account of the same based on authoritative Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, as given in F. O. Schrader's 'Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Abirbudhnya Saṃhitā'. pp. 29-42. T. A. G. Rao's description of them appears in pp. 234-38 of the first volume of his work ; Schrader's presentation is more comprehensive.



who according to the Great Epic was the expounder of the Sātvata vidhi should be endowed with a lion face, and Pradyumna in whom 'aiśvarya' is the predominant 'guṇa' should have a boar face.<sup>1</sup> A clue to the terrific face on the back of the four-faced images, which is that of Aniruddha, can be found, if we take into account the descriptions and real nature of the respective attendants of the Caturvyūhas as given in the 'Viṣṇudharmottara' on the basis of the Pāñcarātra texts. The Purāṇa lays down that Subhadra and Vasubhadra, carrying darts ('prāśa') in their hands are the attendants of Vāsudeva and partake of the nature of Indra and Agni; that Āṣāḍha and Yajñatāta with hammers in their hands, the two attendants of Saṃkarṣaṇa, are to be known as Yama and Virūpākṣa; Jaya and Vijaya, with swords as their weapons, the attendants of Pradyumna, are Varuṇa and Vāyu, while Āmoda and Pramoda, carrying śaktis and accompanying Aniruddha, partake of the nature of Dhanada (Kubera the lord of the Yakṣas) and Śiva.<sup>2</sup> The association of Dhanada and Śiva with Aniruddha who is also regarded according to a few Pāñcarātra texts, as representing the Ahaṃkāra (the two others Saṃkarṣaṇa and Pradyumna standing for Jīva and Manaś), may explain the 'raudra' (terrific) and the uncouth Yakṣa-like appearance of the face.

The above account of the evolution of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu is intimately associated with certain types of Vaiṣṇava icons which have been found in different parts of India. Among the one thousand names of this sectarian god, which are given in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the 'Mahābhārata' (the same number of names are also given to Rudra-Śiva in the Great Epic, which is itself based on the 'Śatarudrīya' section of the Vājasaneyī recension of the white Yajurveda giving hundred names

1. 'Mahābhārata', Bhīṣma Parvan, ch. 66, verses 38-40: 'Sa eṣa śāśvato devaḥ sarvvaguhyamayaḥ śivaḥ | Vāsudeva itī jñeyo yanmāṃ prochaśi Bhārata || Brāhmaṇaiḥ kṣatriyaiḥ vaiśyaḥ śūdrāiśca kṛtalakṣaṇaiḥ | Sevyate 'bhyarcyate caiva nityayuktaiḥ svakarmabhiḥ || Dvāparasya yugasyānte ādan kaliyugasya ca | Sātvataṃ vidhimāsthāya gītaḥ Saṃkarṣaṇena vai' ||

2. 'Viṣṇudharmottara', Book III, ch. 85, verses 29-37. It should be noted that most of these are associated with the eight quarters, the nature of whose guardians they partake of; in another place of the same text (Bk. III, ch. 47, verses 7-8), the eight hands of Viṣṇu are regarded as the four quarters and the four sub-quarters ('Dīśaścatasro dharmajña tāvatyo vidīśastathā | Bāhabo'sṭāu vinirdiśāstasya devasya Śārṅgīnaḥ')



of Rudra ), twenty-four are specially selected and they are the same as the names of the Vyūhas, Sub-Vyūhas and the Vidyeśvaras ( the last name is also associated with certain forms of Śiva ) discussed above. It should again be emphasised here that there is really one God, and the varieties of names are regarded by the devotee as representing different manifestations of the same deity ; thus, the principle of strict monotheism is never lost sight of by the expounders of the system. Now, Schrader, on the basis of the Śrīvaiṣṇava work 'Yatīndramatadīpikā' and the Chapter XXVI of the 'Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā', says that 'they ( the twelve sub-vyūhas ) are usually represented, for the purpose of meditation : Keśava as shining like gold and bearing four discuses, Nārāyaṇa as dark ( like a lotus ) and bearing four conches, Mādhava as shining like a gem ( sapphire ) and bearing four clubs, etc.' ( op. cit., p. 41 ). But in actual representations of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu, no such mode is met with ; the varieties are distinguished one from the other, on the basis of the placing of the four emblems or attributes, the 'śaṅkha', 'cakra', 'gadā' and 'padma' in the four hands of the same type of image. T. A. G. Rao observes, "All these twenty-four images are very alike ; they are all standing figures, with no bends in the body, possessing four arms, and adorned with the 'kirīṭa'-crown and other usual ornaments ; each of them stands upon a 'padmāsana'. The difference between any two of these images has to be made out by the way in which the 'śaṅkha', the 'cakra', the 'gadā' and the 'padma' are found distributed among their four hands. It is worthy of note that the number of possible permutations of four things taken four at a time is exactly twenty-four ; and the order in which the permutations of these four articles, among the four hands is to be observed, is in passing, as in a circle, from the upper right hand to the left hand, thence to the lower left hand, and from there lastly to the lower right hand" ( op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 227-28 ). This extract shows that the chief criterion of differentiation among these images, as has been mentioned by Rao, is liable to misinterpretation and thus to confusion in the matter of identifying individual specimens. Again, Rao speaks about these images as all standing figures ; but it will be presently shown that seated types of such images, though rare, are also to be found. He utilised only the 'Rūpamaṇḍana' and the 'Padmapurāṇa' ( Pātālakhaṇḍa ) passages for describing the individual



varieties and suggested that the list given in the former is more correct, than the one given in the latter, for "on the basis of the 'Padmapurāṇa', Keśava can not be distinguished from Puruṣottama", and as many as eight among the twenty-four forms disagree with the corresponding forms in the 'Rūpamaṇḍana' list. Now, the compiler of the 'Rūpamaṇḍana', after referring to each of these names and associating the four attributes with each in this manner,—'Keśavaḥ kamalaṃ kambuṃ dhatte cakraṃ gadāmapi Nārāyaṇaḥ kambupadmagadācakradharobhavet' (i. e., Keśava should hold a lotus, a conch-shell, a wheel and a mace in his hands; Nārāyaṇa should be carrying a conch-shell, a lotus flower, a mace and a wheel)—, puts in the last couplet that 'such images should be known (as holding these emblems) from their lower right hand upwards and the colour of each six of these (twenty-four) should be like that of Vāsudeva and others' (i. e., the respective colours of Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, white, red, yellow, and black, should be so of each six of the twenty-four forms).<sup>1</sup> B. B. Bidyabinod compared the different passages dealing with the same topic as incorporated in the 'Agnipurāṇa', the 'Padmapurāṇa' and the 'Caturvargacintāmaṇi' of Hemādri in his 'Varieties of the Viṣṇu Image' (M. A. S. I. No. 2), but he failed to take note of the fact that all these different varieties of Viṣṇu images are primarily associated with the Pāñcarātra doctrine of the Vyūhas. He, however, rightly drew our attention to the word 'pradakṣiṇam' at the end

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1. 'Rūpamaṇḍana' passage as quoted by T. A. G. Rao, Vol. I, App. C., P. 64: 'Etāstu mūrtayo jñeyā dakṣiṇādhaḥ karāṭkramāt | Vāsudevādivarṇāssyūṣaṭṣaḍete tadādayaḥ || This reading is far more correct than that given in the edition of 'Rūpamaṇḍana' in the Calcutta Sanskrit Series, which reads: 'Etāḥ samūrttayo jñeyā dakṣiṇādhaḥ karāṭkramāt | ( Vāsudevādivarṇāḥ syuḥ ṣaḍete tadadādayaḥ ? ). Whenever I compared Rao's extracts from this text with the same passages in its Calcutta Sanskrit Series edition, I found the former to be more trustworthy than the latter; it is clear that the Calcutta editor never cared to compare his copy of the manuscript with the portions of the text already published by Gopinath Rao. This will be clear if one refers to the line dealing with Trivikrama. In the Calcutta edition, it appears as 'Trivikramastrīṣu gadācakra śaṅkhān vibharitī yaḥ', which is certainly incorrect; in Rao's extract it is correctly presented as—'Trivikramo'mbujaḥ gadācakraśaṅkhānvīhartī yaḥ'. The editor in his edition of 'Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa', another text said to have been composed by Maṇḍana, could make no sense out of the cryptic mnemonic verses dealing with the same subject; he did not emend them in the light of other texts and his commentary on them is thus extremely inadequate and misleading (cf. 'Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇam', Calcutta Sanskrit Series, No. XII, P. 75 ).



of the first verse dealing with Keśava and Nārāyaṇa images in the 'Agnipurāṇa' ('Om rūpaḥ Keśavaḥ padmaśaṅkhacakraḡadādharaḥ | Nārāyaṇaḥ śaṅkhaḡpadmaḡadācakrī pradakṣiṇam'), and correctly observed that "this is the key for the understanding of the whole system, and means that the various attributes are mentioned in the following order, (1) lower right hand, (2) upper right hand, (3) upper left hand, and (4) lower left hand, or as in the 'pradakṣiṇa'" (ibid. pp. 24-5). A glance at Bidyabinod's tables published in his memoir shows how the various texts differed in their naming of some of these twenty-four forms.

It has already been pointed out by me that most of the standing and seated images of Viṣṇu that are found in northern and eastern India belong to the Trivikrama variety, for these show the lotus mark, mace, wheel and conch-shell in the lower right, upper right, upper left and lower left hands respectively. The specimens housed in many of the Museums here, mostly fall under this group and Bidyabinod has rightly observed that 'it is a surprising fact that the Indian Museum Collection in Calcutta is found to possess not a single image of the technically correct Viṣṇu as such' (acc. to 'Agnipurāṇa' as well as 'Rūpamaṇḡana' such an image would hold a mace, a lotus, a conch-shell and a wheel in the hands according to the order mentioned above), 'and to show a preponderance in favour of the formula P G C S ('Padma Gadā Cakra Śaṅkha'), which according to the Purāṇas, is to be interpreted as Trivikrama, or Upendra, according to Hemādri' (ibid., p. 33). The designation Trivikrama which is given to such varieties, on the basis of the majority of the texts, seems, however, to be the correct one. The preponderance of the Trivikrama form shows indirectly the influence of the Vedic constituent of the composite cult picture, the Āditya Viṣṇu one of whose common epithets in the Vedic texts is Trivikrama. Bidyabinod, however, rightly identified a few other images in the collection of the Indian Museum in the light of the texts consulted by him as Janārdana (P C S G), Adhokṣaja (P G S C) and Śrīdhara (P C G S); it will be interesting to note that the last mentioned group of Śrīdhara can also be identified 'as Hṛṣīkeśa or Dāmodara according to the varying authorities'. The Janārdana and Śrīdhara specimens which are illustrated by him (ibid., plates VII and VIII) are also noteworthy for other iconographic reasons. The first is almost fully in the



round, his hands and the top part of his head being attached to a flat band like 'prabhā' in the upper half of which are carved the ten incarnations ; in its lower half are shown three female figures, two on the proper right ( one of them being seated with her hands in the 'añjali' pose ) and one on the proper left. The two standing figures with probably lotuses in their hands may stand for Śrī and Puṣṭi (after the 'Matsyapurāṇa' text) and the seated figure may represent the goddess Pṛthivī ( or she may also stand for the female donor of the image ); the sculpture can be dated on stylistic grounds in the 12th century A. D.

The other relief, named Śrīdhara, is much earlier ( probably of the 10th century A. D. ); it shows the earlier mode of the 'prabhā' ( partially damaged ), the torso only being in full relief, and the Āyudha-puruṣas, Cakra and Gadā, on whose heads the back right and left hands of the god are placed after the early fashion. A very elegantly carved relief in the collection of the same Museum ( exhibit No. 9117 ), hailing from Radhanagar, Rajshahi, stands for one of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu ; its back right and left hands carry a wheel and a mace respectively, there being indications that its front right and left hands, though broken, might have shown a lotus mark and a conch-shell. So it can be tentatively identified as Śrīdhara ; it is accompanied by Śrī, Puṣṭi and two Āyudha-puruṣas ( probably Śaṅkha and Cakra Puruṣas ) on either side, and it has a curious assortment of eight miniature figures carved on the right and left sides of its 'prabhā'. The four miniatures on the four sides are all standing Viṣṇu figures as the 'vanamālā' and the attributes show, but belonging to the different varieties for the latter are differently placed ; on the proper left, beginning from the top downwards are shown miniatures of a standing Gaṇeśa, another four-armed Viṣṇu figure, Narasiṃha and Varāha incarnations. This is a very novel mode of filling the side spaces of the 'prabhāvali' and I know of no other sculpture of Viṣṇu where similar miniatures are shown on the side ; it can be dated on stylistic grounds in the latter part of the 11th century A. D. Of the seventeen whole Viṣṇu images in stone in the collection of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum, Calcutta, as catalogued by M. Ganguly in his 'Handbook', as many as thirteen and fourteen can be definitely identified as belonging to the Trivikrama variety ; the only other certain sub-order of Viṣṇu in this list



is that of Śrīdhara, according to the 'Agnipurāṇa', 'Rūpamaṇḍana' and 'Caturvargacintāmaṇi' passages, and Hṛṣīkeśa according to the 'Padmapurāṇa'. Rao says that the twenty-four images of Viṣṇu are invariably standing ones; but seated images of this type are also not unknown. The four-armed bronze figure of Viṣṇu seated in 'sukhāsana' on a double-petalled lotus placed on a two-storied 'pañcaratha' pedestal with a separate 'prabhā' containing stylised flames and 'kīrttimukha', and now in the collection of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum, Calcutta, shows the Śrīdhara aspect of Viṣṇu according to the majority of the iconographic texts. The attributes, however, such as 'cakra', 'gada' and 'śaṅkha' are placed on full-blown lotuses held in the three hands of the lord by their stalks while a tiny lotus bud is placed on the fourth hand. This manner of placing the attributes reminds us of the Lokeśvara-Viṣṇu images discussed above; there seems to be a tiny figure of a seated deity on the crown of the image, not noticed by Ganguly, and this feature also places it in the same category with the other group of sculptures.<sup>1</sup>

The extant images of some of the twenty-four or the four principal forms of Viṣṇu do not go back to an age anterior to the late Gupta or

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1. 'Handbook to the Sculptures in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum', pp. 138-39, pl. XXV., O (a)2.

The extreme preponderance of the Trivikrama sub-order among the standing Viṣṇu figures in the north and east of India shows that they are really those of Viṣṇu par excellence, whose special Vedic characteristic, as we have shown in the last chapter, is that of having taken three strides ('trivikrama'). The 'Rūpamaṇḍana' supplies us with the interesting information that Nārāyaṇa, Keśava, Mādhava and Madhusūdana varieties are auspicious if they are worshipped by the Brāhmaṇas; Madhusūdana and Viṣṇu are so to the Kṣātrīyas, Trivikrama and Vāmana, to the Vaiśyas, and Śrīdhara is specially auspicious to the Śūdras; Hṛṣīkeśa is the god who confers benefit on the workers in hyde or skins, washermen, actors, 'varāṭas' (?), 'medabhillas', and 'kirātas'; the worship of Padmanābha is beneficial to the potters, petty traders, women of the town, oilmen and all other people, and that of Dāmodara is so to the Yati (mendicant ascetic) and Brahmacārī (student anchorite); the worship of Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha (same as Dattātreya), Nara-siṃha, Vāmana and Varāha is auspicious and beneficial to members of all castes ('Rūpamaṇḍana', Cal. Sans. Series, p. 13; the reading 'Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha' as suggested in Rao's translation is more acceptable than 'Hari-Hiraṇyagarbhaśca' as given by the editor of the text in the above series). It will be noticed that along with some of the twenty-four sub-orders of Viṣṇu images (only about 18 can be recognised), a few incarnatory and minor forms of Viṣṇu like Varāha and Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha are included in the above list,



the early mediaeval period ; but epigraphic and literary references to some of them as incorporated in the Pāñcarātra doctrine are much earlier. Two of the four principal forms of Viṣṇu, Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, are mentioned in the Nāgarī epigraphs noticed in some detail in the first chapter ; in the Nanaghat Cave inscription, Nāyanikā, the queen of the lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha, invokes the same gods here named Rāma and Keśava, as well as Dharma and Indra. Patañjali notices these two forms under the names Rāma and Keśava when he states in his commentary on Pāṇini, II, 2, 34, that 'certain musical instruments are sounded in a gathering in the temple of Dhanapati, Rāma and Keśava'. R. G. Bhandarkar observes, "If the passage in Patañjali under P. VI, 3, 6, 'Janārdana with himself as the fourth' ( 'Janārdanastātmacaturtha eva' ), i. e., with three companions, may be taken to allude to the three Vyūhas, then it must be understood that the four Vyūhas, Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, were known in Patañjali's time".<sup>1</sup> H. C. Raychaudhuri has noticed 'the almost total absence of any reference to the Vyūhas Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha in the inscriptions of the Gupta Age' ; he has further suggested that 'the disappearance of the independent worship of the Vyūhas excepting Vāsudeva was one of the first fruits of the growing popularity of the Avatāras. The ousting of Vyūhas by the Avatāras was one of the characteristic signs of the transformation of Bhāgavatism into Viṣṇuism'.<sup>2</sup> But there never was any total disappearance, and as he has himself shown in a footnote to the above passage, 'the adoration of Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva seems to survive in the worship of Bala, Kṛṣṇa and Subhadrā mentioned in a Bhuvaneśvara inscription ( 'Ep. Ind.', XIII, 153 ) while Varāhamihira refers to the images of Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and Ekānamśā' ( who is none other than Subhadrā and mythologically a sister of Vāsudeva and Baladeva ). Again, the independent worship of the Vyūhas might not have been much in

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1. R. G. Bhandarkar, 'Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems', p. 12. But he says that it is doubtful, and two Vyūhas were certainly known. It is interesting to note, however, that Janārdana mentioned in this passage is itself one of the names of the 24 forms.

2. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-6.



vogue in the Gupta period and afterwards, but the earliest extant images of some of the Vyūhas date back from the late Gupta period onwards. The Mora well Inscription refers to the enshrinement of the images of five Vṛṣṇi Vīras in a stone temple during the time of the Mahākṣatrapa Sodasa ; these Pañca Vṛṣṇi Vīras are the four principal Vyūhas with Sāmba added to the list. This is the earliest explicit reference to their images. Their sculptures belonging to the early and late mediaeval periods have been discovered in different parts of India and these represent not only the four primary forms but many of the other secondary ones.

The doctrine of the Vibhavas ( Avatāras, i. e., the incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu ), was no less a component part of the Pāñcarātra or the Bhāgavata creed than that of the Vyūhas. The difference which existed between the two lay in the fact that we have some evidence regarding the existence of the former in the later Vedic texts, whereas there is none about the existence of the latter. The term Avatāra is applied to the act of a divine being assuming the form of a man or an animal and continuing to live in that form upon the earth ; thus, it is quite distinguishable from transmigration, identification (where one deity is identified with the other), or emanation ( as is fully displayed in the Vyūha doctrine ). It is also not quite the same as possession of one individual by the divinity, in which the latter takes up temporary abode in the former ; but this idea of possession has to a certain extent manifested itself in the story of the Paraśurāma avatāra of Viṣṇu. In the Pāñcarātra theology, the Vibhavas i. e., manifestations or Avatāras (descents) belong to Pure Creation, and these incarnations may not only be of the Lord Viṣṇu himself, but also be of his Vyūhas, Sub-Vyūhas, his Pāṣadas (companions) or even of his attributes or emblems. H. Jacobi says, 'The tenet of incarnation is a fundamental one in mediaeval and modern Hindu religion and specially it is so with the Viṣṇuites' (E. R. E., Vol. 7. p. 193). The reference to the assumption of a particular form by Viṣṇu in battles, in 'R̥gveda', VII. 100, 6, is taken by some scholars ( R. P. Chanda, in his 'Indo-Aryan Races', pp. 110-11) as the earliest one to incarnation ; the verse in question means : "Oh Viṣṇu is it worthy of you to establish (to make public) the name 'bald' by which I call you ? Do not assume this form, since thou didst assume another form in battle" ('Kimitte



Viṣṇo paricakṣyaṃ bhūtpṛā yadvavakṣe śipiviṣṭo asmi | Mā varpo asmada-pagūha etadyadanyarūpaḥ samithe vabhūtha'). But this is not quite to the point ; for there is no explicit reference in this passage to Viṣṇu's having incarnated himself in a particular form for some special purpose. The earliest passage referring to the assumption of some forms by the divinity for the attainment of certain ends are to be found in the 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa' and the 'Taittirīya Saṃhitā' where Prajāpati is said to have assumed Fish, Tortoise and Boar (Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha) forms on different occasions ; when the doctrine of incarnations in its association with Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa was well-established, all these three were bodily transferred to that composite god, and were regarded as some of his celestial incarnations. This idea is first systematically expounded specially with reference to the god's human incarnations in the first part of the fourth reading of the 'Bhagavadgītā'. When Arjuna doubts the statement of Kṛṣṇa about his expounding the theory and practice of Yoga (really the doctrine of the Ekāntika dharma) to the patriarchs of old, the latter replies, 'Many births of me have passed, and of thee, O Arjuna. I know them all ; thou knowest them not, Paraṃtapa. Though unborn and immutable in essence, though Lord of beings, yet governing Nature which is mine, I come into being by my power of delusion. For whensoever right declines, O Bhārata, and wrong uprises, then I create myself. To guard the good, and to destroy the wicked, and to confirm the right, I come into being in this age and in that'.

The above passage in the 'Bhagavadgītā' about the incarnations of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, though explicit about the underlying idea, does not specify their number and refers to it as indefinite and unlimited. Some

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1. The above translation of the 'Bhagavadgītā', IV. 5-8, is by W. D. P. Hill ; cf. his edition of the work, Introduction, p. 25. It should be noted that these repeated incarnations are those of Kṛṣṇa and not of Viṣṇu : it has been shown in the first chapter that the identification of the two had certainly well begun when the work was composed, but as Hill says, "Kṛṣṇa himself at no point in the Gītā (not even in the 'avatāra' passage, where we should most have expected it) makes any definite claim to Viṣṇu. His avatāra is a descent of Brahman". But there can be no question of thus distinguishing between Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu in the post-Christian period and referring to different cults—one of Kṛṣṇa and the other of Viṣṇu.



later texts, however, had been at pains to do so, and gradually the exact number came to be fixed at ten (Daśavatāras). It will be useful to refer briefly to a few of these texts which supply us with different lists of these incarnatory forms; because if we study them together, we shall not only recognise all the stereotyped ten (this list also varies occasionally in the north and south of India) whose icons are commonly found, but also various others many of whose images, though not so common, are well-known to students of iconography. The Nārāyaṇīya section of the 'Mahābhārata' refers in one list (XII, 349, 37) to the Varāha, the Vāmana, the Narasiṃha and the Man incarnations; probably the last refers to his incarnations as Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Dāśarathi Rāma, and Bhārgava Rāma, for in the chapter 3.9 (verses 77-90) of the same Parvan, not only the stories about the first three in the above list are briefly narrated, but also those about his incarnations as Bhārgava Rāma, Dāśarathi Rāma, and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa are recounted. But in the verse 104 of the same chapter, a fuller list is given, which contains the names of Haṃsa, Kūrma, Matsya, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Rāma (Bhārgava), Rāma Dāśarathi, Sātvata (i. e. Vāsudeva) and Kalki ('Haṃsaḥ Kūrmaśca Matsyaśca prādurbhavad-dvijottama | Varāho Narasiṃhaśca Vāmano Rāma eva ca | Rāmo Dāśarathiścaiva Sātvataḥ Kalkireva ca'). It should be noted that though the number is ten in this last list, Buddha does not find a place here and Kṛṣṇa occupies the position of his elder brother, Balarāma (Saṃkarṣaṇa, but Sātvata may as well refer to the latter who was also a Sātvata chief). The 'Harivaṃśa' gives the same names as are contained in the first list of the Nārāyaṇīya. In the 'Vāyupurāṇa' the names of several of the incarnations of Viṣṇu occur among those of the different struggles that took place between the Devas and Asuras; cf. ch. 97, verses 72 ff. In the Varāhakaṇṭha, there occurred twelve fights between the gods and the demons, the names of which are, in order of precedence: 1) Narasiṃha, 2) Vāmana, 3) Varāha, 4) Amṛtamanthana, 5) Tārakāmaya, 6) Ādivaka, 7) Traipura, 8) Andhakāra, 9) Dhvaja, 10) Vārtta (Vārtra, from Vṛtra), 11) Halāhala, 12) Kolāhala (in some of these struggles Śiva and Indra were the principal actors, not Viṣṇu). In chapter 98 (verses 71 ff.) of the same Purāṇa, mention is made of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu of which the first three, Yajña, Narasiṃha and Vāmana are celestial



(‘*Etāstisrah smṛtāstasya divyāḥ sambhūṭayaḥ śubhāḥ*’), but the fourth called Dattātreyā, one unnamed called the fifth in the Tretāyuga, Jāmadagnya Rāma, Dāśarathi Rāma, Vedavyāsa, Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and the future incarnation Kalkin are human. In the last list also no mention is made of Buddha, and a few other constituents of the stereotyped list of ten. In the ‘*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*’, there are three enumerations of the ‘*avatāras*’; in the first (Bk. I. ch. 3, verses 6-25), 22, in the second (Bk. II, ch. 7, verses 1ff.), 23, and in the third (Bk. XI, ch.4, verses 3ff) 16 are mentioned. The first list contains the names of (1) Puruṣa, (2) Varāha, (3) Nārada, (4) Nara and Nārāyaṇa, (5) Kapila, (6) Dattātreyā, (7) Yajña, (8) Rṣabha, (9) Pṛthu, (10) Matsya, (11) Kūrma, (12) Dhanvantari, (13) Mohinī, (14) Narasiṃha, (15) Vāmana, (16) Bhārgava Rāma, (17) Vedavyāsa, (18) Dāśarathi Rāma, (19) Balarāma, (20) Kṛṣṇa, (21) Buddha and (22) Kalkin. It will be seen that in the above list all the ten appearing in the stereotyped one are included, but in the context, the *Purāṇakāra* tells us that his ‘*avatāras*’ are innumerable (‘*Avatārāhyasamkheyā Hareḥ sattvānīdherdvijāḥ*’). The difference of this list with the other two is immaterial, the last two omitting some included in the first, but none of them omits Rṣabha and Buddha. The ‘*Varāha*’ and ‘*Agni Purāṇas*’ contain the stereotyped list of ten incarnations, while the ‘*Matsyapurāṇa*’ (ch. 47, v. 106) lays down that Viṣṇu was born seven times among men because he was cursed by Bhṛgu for killing his wife, the mother of Śukra (‘*Yasmāt te jānato dharmmamavadhyā strī niṣūditā | Tasmāt tvaṃ saptakṛtveha mānuṣeṣūpapatsyasi*’). These seven, (1) Dattātreyā, (2) Māndhātā, (3) Jāmadagnya (Bhārgava Rāma), (4) Dāśarathi Rāma, (5) Vedavyāsa, (6) Buddha and (7) Kalkin when added to three incarnations, Nārāyaṇa, Narasiṃha and Vāmana, make up the full quota of ten—the constituents of which however widely differ from the generally accepted *Daśāvatāras*. Before the discussion about the number and nature of these incarnations is closed, a reference to the *Ahirbudhnya* list of the *Vibhavas* will be necessary; this *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitā* mentions as many thirty-nine a short analysis of which will supply us with some useful information. Schrader, thus, enumerates the following 39 principal *Vibhavas* on the basis of the said text:— (1) Padmanābha, (2) Dhruva, (3) Ananta, (4) Śaktyātman, (5) Madhu-



sūdana, (6) Vidyādhīdeva, (7) Kapila, (8) Viśvarūpa, (9) Vihaṅgama, (10) Kroḍātman, (11) Baḍavāvakra, (12) Dharma, (13) Vāgīśvara, (14) Ekārṇavaśāyin, (15) Kamaṭheśvara, (16) Varāha, (17) Narasiṃha, (18) Pīyūṣaharaṇa, (19) Śrīpati, (20) Kāntātman, (21) Rāhujit, (22) Kālānemiḥna, (23) Pārījātaḥara, (24) Lokanātha, (25) Śāntātman, (26) Dattātreyā, (27) Nyagrodhaśāyin, (28) Ekaśṛṅgatanu, (29) Vāmanadeha, (30) Trivikrama, (31) Nara, (32) Nārāyaṇa, (33) Hari, (34) Kṛṣṇa, (35) Paraśurāma, (36) Rāma Dhanurdhara, (37) Vedavid, (38) Kalkin, (39) Pātālaśayana. Schrader remarks : 'This list has been reproduced almost exactly from the ninth chapter of 'Sāttvata Saṃhitā' ( pp. 79-80 ); and to that work we are, indeed referred to by our Saṃhitā ( 5. 57 ff. ) for a comprehensive description of the origin etc. of these Vibhavas' ( op. cit., p. 43 ). In this curious assortment, one can easily recognise not only the accepted ten names, a few of the sub-Vyūhas, as well as other incarnatory forms which have been enumerated in the fuller lists of the different Purāṇas, mentioned above, but also other names such as Vāgīśvara (13) and Lokanātha (24) can be found, which most probably belong to the Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon ; Buddha himself is named as Śāntātman (No. 25) in the list.<sup>1</sup> The stereotyped ten incarnations appear in the above two lists under the following names :—I. Ekaśṛṅgatanu (No. 28-Matsya), II. Kamaṭheśvara (No. 15-Kūrma), III. Varāha (No. 16), IV. Narasiṃha (No. 17), V. Vāmanadeha—Trivikrama ( Nos. 29-30 ), VI. Paraśurāma ( No. 32 ), VII. Rāghava Rāma ( No. 36 ), VIII. Ananta ( No. 3—Schrader observes, 'Ananta is not the serpent Śeṣa but Balarāma, the brother of Kṛṣṇa, who is

1. Schrader thinks that the epithets 'Vairāja' and 'Satya-vrata' applied to Lokanātha in the 'Aḥirbudhnyā S.' 56, 35-6, points to Manu Vaivasvata, while Vāgīśvara and Śāntātman are really Hayagrīva and either Sanatkumāra ( Sanaka ) or Nārada respectively : but Lokanātha and Vāgīśvara are two well-known varieties of Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī-Bodhisattvas respectively, and Śāntātman or its synonymous epithets are applied to Buddha in many texts. The 'Bṛhatsaṃhitā' says that the Śākya only are the proper persons for the installation of the Buddha image ('Śākyaṃ sarvāhitasya Śāntamanaso') ; while describing the image of Buddha the same text refers to him as 'prasannamūrti' ( 'Padmāṅkitakara-carapaṇaḥ prasannamūrtiḥ sunīca ( or ta ), keśaśca | Padmāsanopaviṣṭaḥ piteva jagato bhavati Buddhaḥ' ). In the 'Agnipurāṇa' ( ch. 49, 8 ) the very epithet Śāntātman is used to denote Buddha ( 'Śāntātmā laṃvakarṇaśca gaurāṅgaścāimvarāvṛtaḥ | Urddhwapadmasthito Buddho varadābhayaḍāyakaḥ' ); the reference in this passage to the long ears of Buddha is interesting.



sometimes regarded as an incarnation of Śeṣa rather than of Viṣṇu Himself'), IX. Śāntātman (No. 25, Buddha) and X. Kalkin (No. 38).<sup>1</sup>

Several images illustrating the above ten incarnations of Viṣṇu found in different parts of northern and eastern India will be discussed now, those corresponding to a few other incarnatory forms mentioned in the bigger lists being reserved for the next chapter. Stone slabs with the figures of the above ten carved in a row, originally decorating some part of Vaiṣṇava shrines (generally part of the architrave of the main sanctum), are common. The Daśāvatāras are often represented also on the reverse sides of the small stone or metal plaques, denominated as Viṣṇupaṭṭas which are commonly found in different parts of Bengal. Varāha, Nara-siṃha and Vāmana are the only three among these who are very frequently depicted as separate figures, though single sculptures of a few of the remaining ones are not unknown. None of the separate or group representations, however, go back to a period earlier than the Gupta, the few images of Balarāma datable in the Kushana age found in the Mathura region and now in the collection of the same Museum, perhaps depicting the Vyūha Saṃkarṣaṇa whose other name was Balarāma. Some of the Gupta inscriptions either record the construction of independent shrines in honour of a few of the Avatāras or incidentally refer to the mythological stories underlying them. The Eran Inscription of the time of Toramana carved on the chest of a colossal red sandstone statue of a Boar

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1. Schrader observes that the list of 39 Avatāras occurring in one of the very oldest Saṃhitās ('Sātvata') is older than the smaller lists found in later Saṃhitās and older even than the Mahābhārata and Nārāyaṇīya lists, which appear to be mere selections. The 'Aḥirbudhnyā S.' distinguishes between primary ('mukhya') and secondary ('gaṇa', 'āveśa') Avatāras. The 'Visvakṣena Saṃhitā' further explains this by saying that the primary avatāras are like flame springing from a flame i. e., Viṣṇu Himself with 'aprākṛta' body while a secondary Avatāra is a soul in bondage with a 'prākṛta' body which is possessed ('āveśa') for some particular mission or function, by the śakti of Viṣṇu. It enumerates as 'gaṇa' avatāras: Brahman, Śiva, Buddha, Vyāsa, Arjuna, Paraśurāma, the Vasu called Pāvaka, and Kubera, the god of riches. The text further says that all the Avatāras spring from Aniruddha either directly or indirectly, and they are not confined to human and animal forms only, but the vegetable kingdom is sometimes chosen (e. g. the crooked mango tree in the Daṇḍakavana), and the images of the God and his various forms also are regarded as his Avatāras. The Arcā Avatāras are exhaustively treated in this Pāñcarātra text (pp. 122 and 143); Schrader, op. cit., pp. 47-9.











refers to Viṣṇu, having the form of a Boar—'who, in the act of lifting up the earth, caused the mountains to tremble with the blows of his hard snout'; the Damodarpur Copper Plates of the time of Budhagupta also mention this aspect of the incarnation of the god (Varāhaswāmī). The Junagadh Rock Inscription of the time of Skandagupta alludes to the Dwarf incarnation when it says that Viṣṇu 'for the sake of the happiness of (Indra) the lord of the gods, seized back from Bali the goddess of wealth and splendour'. H. C. Ray Chaudhury has drawn our attention to the 'Raghuvamśa' passage (xiii, 1) where the Rāma Avatāra is mentioned ('Rāmābhīdhāno Hari') by Kalidāsa who probably belonged to the Gupta age (op. cit., p. 174); Varāhamihira, while beginning the description of the different images, states that the image of Dāśarathi Rāma should be 120 aṅgulas in measurement (ch. 57. 30). Lastly, one of the Udayagiri Caves, belonging to the early Gupta period bears a colossal relief-representation of the Boar incarnation.

The transfer of myths from Prajāpati to Viṣṇu is illustrated in a very significant manner in the cases of the Fish, Tortoise and Boar incarnations. The 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa' (I. 8. 1, 1) while recounting the legend of the flood says that a fish saved Manu from drowning; this fish form which was assumed by Prajāpati according to some passages of the 'Mahābhārata' and the 'Manusamhitā' was subsequently ascribed in the Purāṇas to Viṣṇu. The 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa' again says that 'having assumed the form of a tortoise, Prajāpati created offspring' (VII, 4, 3, 5: 'Sa yat kūrmo nāma etad vai rūpaṃ kṛtvā Prajāpatiḥ prajāḥ asṛjata'); in the 'Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa' (III, 272), Prajāpati is stated to have become a tortoise—Akupāra Kāśyapa (the 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa' says that 'Kāśyapa means tortoise which is the same as Āditya—'Kāśyapo vai Kūrmah.....asau sa Āditya') and moved in the primæval waters, when about to create offspring. The Purāṇas turn the tortoise into an incarnatory form of Viṣṇu assumed in order to recover various objects lost in the deluge or to serve as a support to the churning mountain Mandāra when the gods and demons were churning the ocean (cf. the 'Bhāgavata Purāṇa' passage, I, 3, 16, 'Surāsuraṇām udadhiṃ mathnatam mathanācalam (mandārācalam) | Dadhre Kamatharūpeṇa prṣṭhe ekādaśe vibhuh'). In order to understand the transformation of the mythology concerning the Boar incarnation,



it will be necessary to refer to two R̥gveda passages ( I. 61, 7 and VIII. 77, 10 ), in the first of which Indra and Viṣṇu are said to have pierced the boar, according to Sāyaṇa the clouds ( 'Muṣāyad Viṣṇuḥ pacataṁ sahiyānvidhyadvarāhaṁ tiro adrimastā' ), and in the second, we find Viṣṇu sent by Indra carrying off a hundred buffaloes and rice cooked with milk which belonged to the boar Emuṣa ( 'Viśvettā Viṣṇurābharadurukrama-stveṣitaḥ | Śataṁ mahiṣān kṣīrapākamodanaṁ varāhamimdra emuṣam' ); it is, however, probably another version of the slaying of Vṛtra and the mountain, the cloud mountain. In the 'Taittirīya Saṁhitā' ( VI. 2, 4. 2, 3 ), the boar keeps the wealth of the Asuras hidden on the far side of the seven hills; Indra picks up a bunch of Kuśa grass and pierces the hills and slays the boar; Viṣṇu, the sacrifice, then carries off the boar as a sacrifice for the gods. But the earlier mythology is transformed in the 'Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa' ( XIV. 1, 2, 11 ) in its application of the 'Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā' ( 37, 5 ), which says that the boar Emuṣa raised the earth whose lord was Prajāpati ( 'tāṁ Emuṣaḥ iti Varāhaḥ ujaghāna so'syāḥ patiḥ Prajāpatiḥ' ), and the 'Taittirīya Saṁhitā' ( VII. 1, 5, 1 ) further identifies the cosmogonic boar with a form of Prājapati himself; in the 'Taittirīya Āraṇyaka', the earth is said to have been raised by a black boar with a hundred arms ( 'varāheṇa kṣṇeṇa śatabāhunā uddhṛtā' ). It is an easily understandable step to the making of the boar an incarnation of Viṣṇu himself, a step which is finally taken in the epics and the Purāṇas.

The fish and tortoise incarnations are represented in two ways, either in purely theriomorphic manner or as hybrid forms in which the upper half is human and the lower half animal; these two again are seldom depicted singly. A relief depicting the Matsya avatār, originally from Vajrayogini, Dacca, and now in the collection of the local Museum is extremely interesting. Matsya appears as a four-armed hybrid figure, its upper part being human and the lower fish-like; it carries in its hands the usual attributes of Viṣṇu and is a very beautiful specimen of the art of the late mediaeval period. Among the reliefs found inside a small temple at Pathari, Central Provinces, Beglar recognised all the ten Avatāras of Viṣṇu except the Matsya; the Kūrma Avatāra, as represented here, characteristically illustrates the story of the churning of the ocean. A pole is placed on the back of a tortoise with a rope wound



round it, the ends of which are held on opposite sides by human figures representing the gods and demons ; Beglar says that the pole here stands for the Mandar hill and the rope, for Vāsuki.<sup>1</sup> The sculpture belongs to the early mediaeval period. The Boar incarnation is represented in several different ways, the principal types being, as in the case of the two previous ones, theriomorphic and hybrid. Both these modes were being used simultaneously by the Indian iconographers as the extant specimens show. One of the earliest sculptural representations of this motif is the relief in the open cutting No. 4 at Udayagiri, 5 miles from Sanchi, already referred to above ; the colossal figure of Viṣṇu as the Varāha Avatāra is represented as a man with a boar's head. 'With his left foot he treads on the coils of the Nāga king, who has a canopy of thirteen snakes' heads, seven in front and six in the intervals behind. His right hand rests on his hip and his left on his knee. With his right tusk he raises Pṛthvī, a female figure personifying the earth, from the depths of the ocean, which is represented by long undulating lines on the background of the rock. Behind the Nāga King there is a male figure kneeling, who may perhaps be the ocean king himself. To the left of the boar's head there are some of the heavenly musicians, and to the right and left are four lines of figures filling the whole background of the composition. Amongst these, I recognised Brahmā with his beard, Śiva riding his bull Nandi and numerous other gods with haloes round their heads. Another line is occupied apparently by Asuras, or demons, and a third line by bearded Ṛṣis'.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the god seems to be represented with two hands and no attributes are to be found on them ; ornaments on the body of the god are very few, of which thick 'valayas' (bracelets) and a long, heavy 'vanamālā' are prominent. The contrast between the massive, forceful figure of the deliverer and that of the slender, creeper like goddess, the delivered one, clinging to the right tusk and the upper part of the left arm of the god, is great. A comparison between the above relief and the two in Badami, about a century and a half later than the

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1. A. S. R., VII, p. 70.

2. A. S. R., X, p. 48, Pl. XVIII.



above, will show the difference in treatment of the same motif. The south Indian artists of the early Calukya period introduced more finesse in the delineation of the theme but the success which was attained by them in this respect was counter-acted by the loss of energetic vigour which is so supremely manifest in the earlier sculpture<sup>1</sup>. The composition found at Mahabalipuram, about a century later than the Badami reliefs, illustrates the same theme in a very touching manner. The god lovingly holds up the goddess with his front two hands, who is seated on his right knee, the right leg of the god resting on the hoods of the Ādiśeṣa shown issuing out of water with his hands in the 'añjali' pose; just in front of Ādiśeṣa is a female figure who has rightly been identified by Rao as the earth goddess just rescued from the waters, before she is caressed by her lord; the other accessories are the half-expressed figures of Sūrya and Candra hovering in the sky with their hands in the 'añjali' pose, Brahmā and Śiva (?) on either side of the god and another with matted locks in his head and a gourd and 'viṇā' in his hands which has been identified by Rao as the Ṛṣi Nārada. There is no doubt about the excellence of the execution of this relief and in spite of the slenderness of its limbs the main figure shows latent strength and vigour<sup>2</sup>. If we now turn our attention to some of the best carvings of the same incarnation belonging to eastern India, which are preserved in the Museum of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad in Calcutta and that of the Varendra Research Society at Rajshahi, we find certain remarkable differences in the representation of this subject. The Jhilli and Chandpara (Murshidabad) images in the former and the Silimpur one in the latter are among the best sculptures in Bengal.

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1. For the two Badami reliefs refer to R. D. Banerjee's 'Bas-reliefs of Badami' ('M. A. S. I', No. 25), pp. 16-17, 36, and plates IX (b) and XVII (b). Rao describes the second of these reliefs, thus, 'In it great prominence is naturally given to principal figure of Varāha. The attendant deities Brahmā and Śiva are shown with their consorts on the proper right and left of the central Varāha, and certain devas are shown sailing in the air. Both Brahmā and Śiva have one of their hands held up in the pose of praise. At the foot of Varāha is Ādiśeṣa's wife (or is it Pṛthivī before she was raised); on the proper left is standing erect Ādiśeṣa himself, and on the proper right is an attendant woman holding the 'chauri' (op. cit., Vol. I, p. 140).

2. T. A. G. Rao, op. cit., Vol. I. pp. 137-40, pl. XXXVI.





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b







These early and late mediaeval icons generally depict one mode of representing this incarnatory form ; the boar head of the hybrid figure is sometimes shown like a conch-shell placed sideways on the neck of the deity. The Silimpur (Bogra) Varāha, datable in the 10th century A. D., shows this peculiar form of the head ; the hilly region is conventionally represented ; the earth goddess is placed on the left shoulder of the god, which is unusual. In the north and east Indian reliefs illustrating this theme the goddess is generally placed on the left elbow of the deity one of whose feet rests on the hands of the Ādiśeṣa, which partially corresponds to the 'Agnipurāṇa' description of the Avatāra which is given here : 'Caturbāhur-Varāhastu Śeṣapānitale dhṛtaḥ | Dhārayan bāhunā Pṛthvīm vāmena Kamalādharaḥ' (ch. 49, 18) ; but in verses 2-3 of the same chapter it is said : 'Narāṅgo vātha karttavyo Bhūvarāho gadādibhṛt | Dakṣiṇe vāmake śaṅkhaṃ Lakṣmīrvā padmameva vā || Śrīrvāmakūrparasthā tu Kṣmānantau caraṇānugau'. So, according to the 'Agnipurāṇa', the goddess seated on the left elbow is to be identified as Śrī, and the earth goddess and Ananta are near the feet of the god ; but the 'Matsyapurāṇa' says that 'Mahāvarāha with a 'gadā' and a lotus in his hands, after rescuing the earth with his sharp tusk, had placed her on his left elbow ; his one foot should be placed on a tortoise and the other on the head of the Nāga King' (ch. 260, vv. 28-30 : 'Mahāvarāhaṃ vakṣyāmi padmahastaṃ gadādharaṃ | Tīkṣṇadaṃṣṭrāgraghoṇāśyaṃ Medinīvāmakūrparam || Daṃṣṭrāgreṇoddhṛtaṃ dāntaṃ Dharaṇimutpalānavitaṃ | .....Kūrmopari tathā pādamekaṃ Nāgendramūrdhani'). The Indian Museum specimen reproduced by Rao in plate XXXIX, fig. 3 of his book (vol. 1) shows the theme corresponding to the above two descriptions. The 'Viṣṇudharmottara' description of Nṛvarāha reliefs fits in with several types of this hybrid form—one in which he is more or less similar to the above, (cf. the express mention that the goddess should be shown on his left elbow—'savyyeratnigatā tasya yoṣid rūpā vasundharā'), another in which he is shown as about to decapitate Hiraṇyākṣa (who is 'anaiśvarya' incarnate, the Varāha form being 'aiśvarya' incarnate) with his 'cakṛa' the demon standing with a raised 'śūla' in front of him ; or he should be shown seated like Kapila in the 'dhyāna' pose or his hands may be



so placed as if offering 'piṇḍas' (Book III, ch. 79, verses 7-9 : 'Hiraṇyākṣa-śiracchedaścakrodyatakarō'thavā | Śūlodyata Hiraṇyākṣasammukho bhagavānbhavet || Mūrtimantamanaiśvaryaṃ Hiraṇyākṣaṃ vidurbudhāḥ | Aiśvaryaṇa Varāheṇa sa nirasto'rimardanaḥ || Nṛvarāho'thavā kāryo dhyāne Kapilavatsthitaḥ | Dvibhujastvathavā kāryaḥ piṇḍanirvahanodyataḥ'). The Phalodi (Jodhpur, Marwar) Varāha is a remarkable piece of sculpture ; the body of the god is well-proportioned, the ornaments are tastefully arranged, and certain additional features as two fully spread lotus leaves, one serving as the umbrella over the boar head like a conchshell placed sideways over the neck and the other on which the left foot of the deity rests and which shelters the Nāgas beneath it and the slight tilt upwards of its right leg—all these endow the whole composition with grace<sup>1</sup>.

The Rajsahi Museum image of Varāha (No. 799) shows just below the leg of the central figure the demon Hiraṇyākṣa who is being chased by the god in his theriomorphic form. A description of several images of the Varāha Avatāra, as given above, fully proves the fact that the individual artists of the different localities, who were responsible for them, though following in the main the principal injunctions about the depiction of the motif as laid down in local texts, introduced many novel features which gave an ever fresh animation to the sculptures.

The fully theriomorphic representation of this incarnatory form was also adhered to especially in the Gupta period. I have already referred to the inscribed stone boar that was found at Eran ; it has been described by Fleet as follows : 'The Boar is covered all over with elaborate sculptures, chiefly of Rishis or saints clinging to its mane and bristles. It has the earth represented as a woman hanging on, in accordance with the legend, to its right-hand tusk ; and over its shoulders there is a small four-sided shrine, with a sitting figure in each face of it'<sup>2</sup>. The sculpture is of great iconographic interest on account of two important

1. T. A. G. Rao, Plate XXXIX, figs. (3) and (2).

2. J. F. Fleet. C. I. I., p. 159. Fleet noticed a similar boar, almost entirely buried, by the roadside about halfway between Sanchi and Udayagiri ; op. cit. pp. 159, f. n. I.



features, the various miniature figures on its body illustrating that section of the story about this incarnation which refers to the gods, sages and various other beings taking shelter on the body of the Boar when it was about to rescue the earth from the nether regions ( the Udayagiri sculptor carved the same miniature figures on the background, for the human body of the latter would ill afford to contain all these miniatures ), and secondly the small four-sided shrine on the shoulders of the boar, the four sitting figures on the four sides of which probably represent the four principal forms of Viṣṇu. Reference may be made in this connection to the fine image of the boar incarnation, which R. D. Banerjee saw lying in the compound of the temple of Viṣṇu-Varāha at Bilhari, Central Provinces. This figure has unfortunately lost its legs ; its body is entirely covered with figures of gods. 'On the body we find a row of Gaṇeśas in the second row from the top ; the third row contains the figures of the twelve Ādityas ; in the fourth we have perhaps the eleven Rudras, and so on'; the sculpture can be dated on stylistic grounds in the 11th century A. D.<sup>1</sup> Another figure of a full boar was discovered by Cunningham at Khoh in the Nagode State, whose body is, however, plain ; it is of an earlier date. He describes this large statue of the Varāha, 5½' in length and 3' 9" high, in this way : 'Prone between the boar's legs there is a Nāga, with human head and body and serpent's tail. He is canopied by five snakes' hoods, and holds out two vessels in his hands below the boar's snout' ( A. S. R. Vol. IX, P. 6 ). The texts while describing the images of Varāha generally refer to the hybrid form already discussed at length ; but they sometimes expressly lay down that sometimes the god should be shown 'wholly as a boar with a thick snout, broad shoulder-blades, long tusks and a big body covered with up-turned bristles' ( 'Athavā sūkarākāraṃ mahākāyaṃ kvacillikhet | Tīkṣṇa-damṣṭrāgraghaṇāsyaskandhakarnordhvāromakam', Rao, op. cit., I, App. c., 30 ). The former hybrid type, differently described as Ādivarāha, Bhūvarāha and Mahāvarāha in different texts has been correctly named as Nṛvarāha in the 'Viṣṇudharmottara' ( Bk. III, Ch. 79 ) ; this closely corresponds

1. R. D. Banerjee, 'The Haihayas of Tripuri and Their Monuments' ( M. A. I., No. 23 ), p. 94, Pl. XXXVII (b).

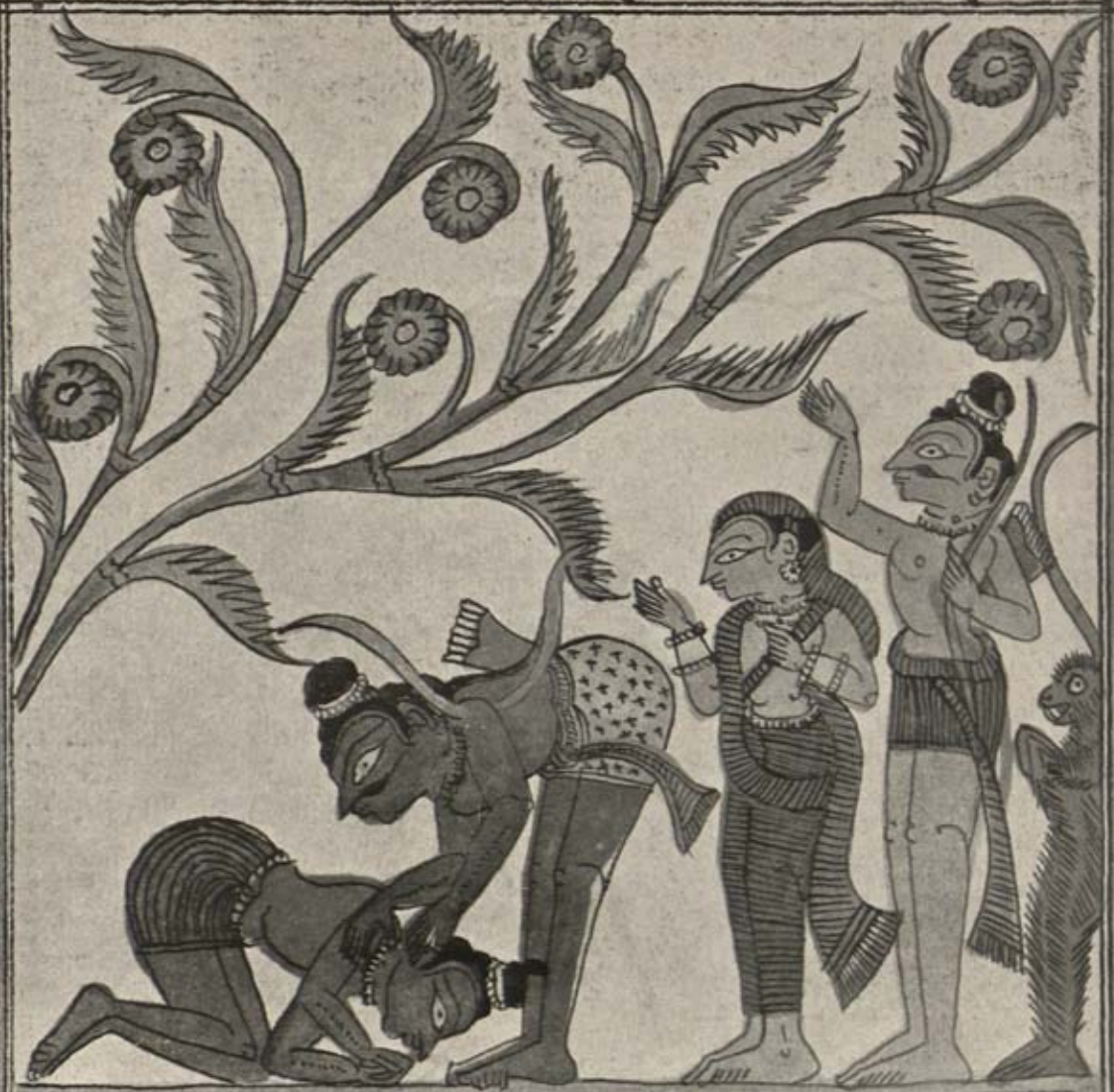


to the other hybrid image known as Nṛsiṃha or Narasiṃha to be discussed next. The fully animal form is simply mentioned there as Varāha (‘Samagrakroḍarūpo vā bahudānavamadhyagaḥ | Nṛvarāho Varāho vā kartavyaḥ Kṣmāvidāraṇe’). Two other types of Varāha, Yajña Varāha, in which the god is to be depicted seated in ‘lalitāsana’ on a lion seat, accompanied by his two consorts Lakṣmī and Bhū, and Pralaya Varāha seated in the same pose but accompanied by one of his consorts, Bhūdevi, are mentioned by T. A. G. Rao on the basis of the ‘Vaikhānasā-gama’ text (op. cit. vol. I. pp. 135-36); but no images corresponding to the two are known to me, nor could Rao illustrate these descriptions.

The Narasiṃha images, though not as numerous as those of Varāha are fairly common in different parts of northern and eastern India. The image of Narasiṃha, unlike the other incarnatory form, is neither mentioned in the inscriptions of the Gupta period, nor is it found carved in any of the extant early Gupta shrines. The Alina copperplate inscription of the year 447 (766-67 A. D.) of the Valabhi king Śilāditya VII, Dhruvabhāta incidentally refers to the Man-lion incarnation of Viṣṇu when it refers to Śilāditya VI as having exceeded in energy even the god Viṣṇu who assumed the form of the man-lion. But this paucity of early epigraphic references does not mean that this incarnatory form of Viṣṇu was not known in the Gupta period or perhaps earlier. In the tenth book of the ‘Taittirīya Āraṇyaka’, which is, however, a supplement (khila) to the original text, is given the Gāyatri mantra of this deity along with those of various other gods who were members of the later Brahmanic pantheon; many of the iconographic texts, some of which will be shortly noticed in explaining a few of the extant types, are of comparatively early date. The representation of the deity in one of the Gupta terracotta seals was shown by me in chapter IV of my book on the ‘Development of Hindu Iconography’ (p. 207). The sculpture of a standing Narasiṃha in Cave No. IV at Badami is probably one of the earliest plastic forms of this Avatāra. The four-armed lion-faced god is shown standing with his back hands carrying the Cakra and Śaṅkha in their personified forms shown hovering in the air, with his front left hand placed on a



श्रीतिपरमवितोमिरघुराई। हरिउठायातियोरोउभाई।



॥ सुधः छंद ॥

लियहिरेलायसिपानिधानसुजानरामरमापती॥ वय  
ठारिपरमसमीपपून्ह्योउसलमोसकमापती॥ कव







'gadā' by the side of which appears the personified Gadādevī; to the proper right of the god appears a dwarf-like figure which has been identified by Rao as Padmapuruṣa; the object held in his front left hand is not quite distinct; on the top section of the relief are hovering Vidyādhara couples. If the identification of the accessories is correct, the two other most important persons in the drama of the Narasiṃha Avatāra, Prahlāda and his father Hiranyakaśipu, are nowhere to be found. The substance of story associated with the particular incarnatory form is that Prahlāda who was a devout Viṣṇubhakta could not be tolerated by his father Hiranyakaśipu, the brother of Hiranyākṣa (killed by Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation); the demon king tried various means to kill his renegade son, but was unsuccessful. In the end when he asked the latter to point out to him the place where the object of his son's devotion lay, Prahlāda pointed out to him a pillar from which when broken open by his irate father issued Viṣṇu as part man and part lion. The story is that Hiranyakaśipu previously obtained a boon from Brahmā by practising severe austerities, that no man or beast would be able to kill him, and Viṣṇu out of respect to Brahmā's behest had to assume this peculiar composite form which was neither human nor animal. Then the god felled the demon on his knees and tore open his entrails with his claws and thus killed him outright. It will be seen after a comparison with the two earliest and many later representations of this incarnatory form, that the latter almost invariably portray the essential details of this mythology, while the former, especially the one on the Gupta terracotta seal does not do so. The Bhita seal impression shows the lion-faced god seated in the 'lalitāsana' posture on a lotus seat; it can be described as Kevala Narasiṃha on the basis of later iconographic texts, though the sitting posture of the figure is differently given in the latter. T. A. G. Rao refers to several varieties of Narasiṃha images such as Sthauna, Girija, Kevala, Yānaka, according to the authority of the 'Vaikhānasāgama', and illustrates the first and third varieties in his book; he also illustrates several extant varieties of Narasiṃha images which do not belong to any one of these groups and whose descriptions are not found in any of the known Sanskrit texts. Reference is also made by him to one form in



which Narasimha, in a somewhat placid aspect is shown accompanied by his consort Lakṣmī which he names as Lakṣmī Narasimha (op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 149-61 and plates). The Badami relief just referred to has been placed by him under the Kevala Narasimha variety; but if we compare the description quoted by him from the text which says that such a type of the god should be shown as seated in 'utkuṭikāsana' on a lotus pedestal with his back hands holding 'śaṅkha' and 'cakra' and his front hands stretched over his raised knees; we see that the sculpture and the textual description do not tally with each other. The stone sculpture of the Hoysala school hailing from Halebidu and reproduced by him in plate XLII of his book (Vol. I) is in thorough agreement with the above text. The beautiful stone relief from the Daśāvatara cave, Ellora as well as the one of much inferior workmanship and of later date from Dadikkombu near Dindigul in South India, show the actual combat between the god and the demon (op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 156-9, Pls. XLIV and XLV). E. B. Havell remarks about the former: 'The sculptor has chosen the moment when the terrific apparition of the man-lion rushes forth to seize Hiraṇya, who, taken unawares and with the mocking taunt still on his lips, makes a desperate effort to defend himself'; Havell emphasises also the technical strength and imaginative power manifest in the treatment of the subject ('Indian Sculpture and Painting', 2nd Edition, pp. 53-4, Pl. XXIII). With regard to the sameness in the depiction of the motif in the two reliefs, Rao observes that this close similarity indicates 'the existence of an authoritative description in some work bearing upon the formation of images and forming the basis of these productions of interest and value'. About the former relief Rao very rightly says: 'The master touch of the work of the artist may be seen in the way in which the interlocking of the leg of Narasimha with that of Hiraṇyakaśipu is carried out'. The 'Matsya Purāṇa' passage (ch. 260, v. 34-5) describes one type of Narasimha, which seems to correspond with the above two reliefs: the god and demon should be shown fighting with their legs interlocked; the former should appear as being repeatedly attacked by the tired demon who should be shown as holding a sword and a shield;—'Yudhyamānaśca karttavyaḥ kvacit ka- (should be 'ca') raṇabandhanaiḥ | Pariśrāntena daityena tarjijyamāno



muhurmuhuh || Daityam pradarśayet tatra khadgakhetaḥ kadhāraṇam').

If we compare these south-Indian sculptures with some from north and east-India illustrating the same theme, we find certain iconographic features in the latter which are not present in the former. In these the demon is usually placed on the thighs of the god who is generally shown in the half-standing and half-seated attitude, with his right knee raised and the right leg sometimes placed on the hoods of Ādiśeṣa; Prahlāda is very often absent from such sculptures; the front hands are shown engaged in tearing up the entrails of Hiranyakaśipu, while the back hands carry two of the attributes of the god. The Gharwa sculpture, described by Cunningham in his Archaeological Survey Reports, Vol. IX. p. 6, very closely corresponds to the above description. The Paikore (Birbhum, Bengal) figure of Narasimha shows the head of the demon placed on his left thigh, while the rest of its body seems to hang on the claws of the deity. Many more similar images from eastern India follow to a very great extent this mode of representation; but there are certain reliefs in the Dacca Museum collection, which show the main figure as six-armed, its front pair of hands thrust into the entrails of the demon, the middle pair taking hold of its head and legs and the back pair shown in two poses, 'abhaya' and 'tarjjanī'. But the Paikore and some Rampal images (the former in Rajshahi and the latter in the Dacca Museum) show an additional element which is not present in the majority of these reliefs; the artist illustrates the various sections of the mythology underlying this incarnatory form by a repetition of the figures of some of the principal actors in the drama on the backslab. The 10th century A. D. Narasimha relief found by R. D. Banerjee at a place called Manora in Maihar state, Central India, presents the theme differently.

The god is standing, with his left leg on the head of a demon who is lying prostrate on the ground. His right leg is pressed forward; he has four hands; the upper left hand is broken and the object held in the lower is indistinct. The upper right hand holds a wheel while the lower is engaged in tearing the entrails out of the demon king Hiranyakaśipu who is represented as falling down on the right. Hiranyakaśipu has two hands and holds a sword in his right



hand and a shield in his left. The face of the god is that of a 'realistic' lion and his head is covered with a long, shaggy mane, out of which two ears project over his forehead. This type of the image of Narasiṃha is unique, as no other specimen is known to exist. Usually, in images of the man-lion, the god is seated and the figure of Hiraṇyakaśipu is lying prostrate on his knees'.<sup>1</sup>

It will be of use now to refer to a few iconographic texts, with which some of the usual Narasiṃha sculptures correspond. The 'Agnipurāṇa' says that Narasiṃha should be shown with open mouth, the wounded demon should be placed on his left thigh, the deity with a garland on his neck and a wheel and a mace in his hands should be depicted piercing the breast of the demon (ch. 49, v. 4 :—'Narasimho vivṛttāśyo' vāmorukṣatadānavah | Tadvakṣo dārayan mālī sphuraccakragadā-dharah'). The 'Hayaśirṣa Pañcarātra' gives a summary description of a four-armed Man-Lion; it simply says that the four-armed god is holding 'śaṅkha', 'cakra' and 'gadā' or only 'śaṅkha' and 'cakra', and should be shown as tearing up the great demon ('Narasimhaścaturbāhuḥ śaṅkhacakra-gadādharah | Śaṅkhacakradharovāpi vidārta mahāsuraḥ'). But in another passage, the same text speaks about this incarnatory form in fuller details: The vast face of Nṛsiṃhadeva should be a little bent; his eyes should be round, the auspicious shoulders, one 'tāla' in measurement; the eyebrows should be a little contracted, the mouth with fierce tusks should be open; the tongue should be lolling and matted locks should be shown on the head; ... the great demon being torn by him should be placed on his knees; he should wear a 'vaijayanti' and be accompanied by Śrī; one should show Nṛsiṃha as holding a sword and a wheel; such an image should be installed for the destruction of sin and the attainment of victory (both these passages from the 'Hayaśirṣa' are quoted by Gopala Bhatta in the 18th Vilāsa of his work). The 'Matsya Purāṇa' (ch. 260, verses 31-35) elaborately describes an eight-armed image of Narasiṃha, which is unusual; I have already referred

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1. R. D. Banerjee, 'The Haihayas of Tripuri and Their Monuments' (M. A. S. I., 23), p. 71, and plate XXVIII (b).











to some six-armed representations of this image type, but no eight-armed form is so far known to me.

These Matsya Purāṇa verses explain the Ellora and Dindigul reliefs. Texts corresponding to them could not be found by Gopinath Rao. The 'Viṣṇudharmottara' account of Narasiṃha finally explains the real nature underlying this particular conception of the deity. It lays down 'He who is Lord Viṣṇu having the form of a man-lion and who is the increaser of the highest knowledge has been thus described by persons well-up in meditation; his shoulders, neck and waist are fleshy, the middle part of his body as well as his belly is lean, he has a lion face and a man's body, he wears blue garments and is lustrous, he is decorated with all ornaments and is in 'ālīḍha' pose, flames issue from his face and mane, he is shown tearing up the breast of Hiranyakaśipu with his sharp claws; the demon of the colour of blue lotus, who as the sages know him is ignorance personified, is placed on the knee of the god.' Then the text says that 'the Lord Nṛsiṃha is really Saṃkarṣaṇa in his inner self and is the destroyer of "ajñāna"; the god Saṃkarṣaṇa (who, as we have shown is one of the principal Vyūhas) destroys three kinds of taint arising out of speech, mind and body in this world; Hari assumes the body of man-lion out of the Saṃkarṣaṇa part latent in him and is the destroyer of the above three kinds of taint' (personified by the demon).<sup>1</sup>

(To be continued)

1. "Viṣṇudharmottara", Bk. III, ch. 78, vv. 1-7. The last three couplets are:—*Hiranyakaśi-  
purdaltanastamajñānam vidurbudhāḥ | Saṃkarṣapātmā bhagavānaśjñānasya vināśanah || Vāḥmanahkṛya-  
sambhūtam trividham jagatām malam | Etat-Saṃkarṣaṇo devaḥ sadā pāṭayati dvija || Hari  
Saṃkarṣapāṃśena Narasiṃhavapurdharah | Tamastatrividhasyāpi nāśano jagatām Hariḥ*. Then in the next few verses two other types of this incarnatory form are mentioned; in one the god is depicted seated at ease on a 'siṃhāsana' holding his usual attributes and his feet resting on the earth personified; in the other his four hands are adorned by his four emblems, flames are issuing out of his body which is either endowed with all ornaments or devoid of them. These two types are purely cult-deities—in which the mythological element has been largely eliminated.



## AN ILLUSTRATED RĀMĀYAṆA MANUSCRIPT OF TULSĪDĀS AND PAṬS FROM BENGAL

by D. P. GHOSH

In 1942, during the course of my tour in the Murshidabad district in Bengal, I came across an illuminated 'Rāmacarita Mānasa' or Hindi Rāmāyaṇa by Tulsīdās<sup>1</sup>. To my knowledge this is the only fully illustrated Rāmāyaṇa manuscript found in Bengal. Containing 152 multicoloured illustrations the manuscript of 342 pages is complete in 8 Kāṇḍas except the last few pages. Written on paper by Dwija Ichchharam Misra for the study of Rani Janaki Devi of Mahisadal Raj Estate, Dt. Midnapore, we learn from the colophons at the end of each of the cantos that the work took three years to be completed from Saka 1694 to 1697 (1772-75 A. D.). Although written in Hindi by the Prayag Brahman, apparently the Kula Purohita, for the edification of his princely patron, the illustrations are undoubtedly the work of local Midnapur artists. Some of the last pages subsequently replaced, in a decadent handwriting, are without pictures. The style of the paintings shows a marked variety in the earlier and later groups denoting the employment of more than one artist. The script on each page (size  $9\frac{3}{4}$ " x  $12\frac{1}{4}$ ") fills varied geometric patterns within the coloured borders as in Mughal manuscripts.

Seven illustrations are reproduced here. Pl. V. representing the frontispiece, envisages the opening passage of the Ādikāṇḍa when the sage Nārada on his usual round of paying homage to Viṣṇu visits Vaikuṇṭha-

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1. I was successful in persuading Sri Ramdas Aulla, Mohant of the famous Vaiṣṇavite establishment (Ākhaṛā) of Sādhakbāg, the owner of the manuscript, to present it to the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University. I am grateful to the Mohant for the generous gift of this remarkable record.



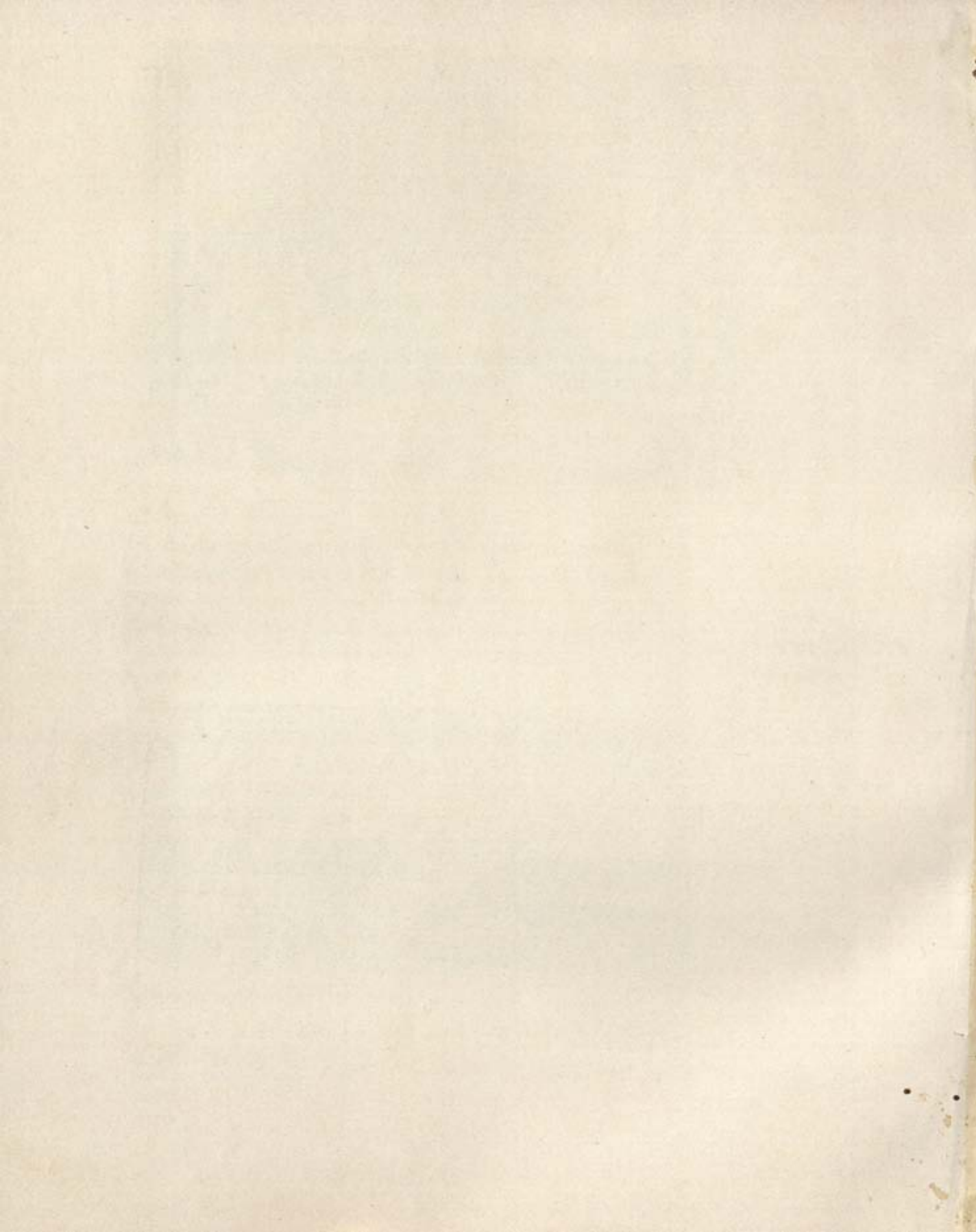


a



b







puri and is surprised to find there instead of Viṣṇu, Rāma enthroned and attended by his three brothers, Sītā and Hanumān. Apparently perplexed he seeks the help of Śiva who explains that this peculiar manifestation of Viṣṇu foreshadows his impending birth on earth as Rāma Avatār to free the world from the depredations of Rāvaṇa.

In this scene Rāma is seated in the Vīrāsana on a throne in the form of a Pīṭha with Sītā behind, an attendant in front presumably Lakṣmaṇa holding the royal fan and Hanumān seated in adoration at his feet. Bharata and Śatrughna are missing. The setting denotes a royal pavilion with three towers and flags proudly fluttering in the wind across and beyond the frame in a vigorous way. The composition recalls a similar contemporary Orissan palm-leaf painting.<sup>1</sup> Very few colours, indigo, dull green, yellow ochre, and light red produce a sober tone. Indication of the drapery by double and triple lines is a noteworthy feature.

The familiar legend of Bhāgiratha is illustrated on Pl. VIa. Bhāgiratha was successful inspite of heartbreaking obstacles in persuading the goddess Gaṅgā to descend to earth from heaven to resurrect by a touch of her sacred waters sixty thousand of his predecessors turned into ashes through a curse. He is seen here proudly leading the way in the chariot of Brahmā, blowing the conch-shell ( here represented as a horned bugle ) and ringing the bell with Gaṅgā docilely following the chariot wheels. This panel is set in the middle of the respective page. A forceful compositional sweep describes the descent and forward movement of the procession. In the chariot portion, pink and light red predominate, interspersed with indigo, dull green and yellow ochre. The river waters at the back are depicted by waves in a gradation of shades of indigo merging into pink and white with a thin ribbon of light red connecting the two portions of the picture.

An interesting episode in the third day's battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa is shown in Pl. VIb. The chariot specially sent by Indra for the occasion and supporting the divine brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa rushes furiously at Rāvaṇa's which is without horses but is adorned with a

(1) J. I. S. O. A., vol. IX, 1941, Pl. XVI.



Makara head. Rāma makes desperate efforts to kill Rāvaṇa apparently invincible and aiming a javelin against him. He cuts all his heads and hands hundred times, but each time the decapitated limbs go up and rejoin the trunk of Rāvaṇa through the boon granted by Brahmā making him immortal. The towering figure of the demon king hurling defiance at the futile attempts of his diminutive adversaries, the chariots, the string of magic heads encircling Rāvaṇa like an enormous halo, decapitated hands surging upwards, violent gestures of the contending parties, all go to make the picture a piece of mighty movement.

The happy reunion between Bharata and Rāma on the way to Ayodhyā is the theme of Plate VII. Rāma tenderly stoops down to lift up the sorrowing Bharata, who at the sudden return of his exiled brother, has fallen at his feet. Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, standing behind followed by Hanumān, raise their arms in greeting. A rambling, flowering plant emphasises the diagonal composition of the figures.

A continuation and elaboration of the reunion scene, after the return of the exiled party, is shown on Pl. VIII. It is a full page illustration divided into three horizontal panels filled with standing figures. The figure of Rāma repeatedly shown and yet clad in his exile dress, alternates with the adoring figures of his brothers and other dear and near ones whom he joyously greets. Vivacious couples are pitted against each other, princely figures in flowing spotted robes, yellow or dark indigo, bare bodied yellow figures clad in dark indigo clothes are contrasted with the green body of Rāma.

The humiliation of invincible Rāvaṇa—flushed with vanity at the boon of immortality conferred upon him by Brahmā—at the hands of Bali, the king of monkeys, is depicted with great vigour in Pl. IXa. Bali grapples with the demon king, fastened in his tail, and ducks him heartily in the four oceans, the waves of which are probably indicated by the conventional patterns fringing the panel. Sharp jagged and diagonal lines denote the powerless form of Rāvaṇa and the striding figure of Bali. A shallow sweeping arch above unites the rugged movements of the component parts of the picture.

A miraculous incident in the life of Rāma as a child with reference to the hoary crow Bhūṣaṇḍī, is illustrated on Pl. IXb. The grada-











tion of colours as in the case of the water, Pl. VIa, holds good also for the sky.

The paintings of the manuscript by the Midnapur artists are forerunners of the indigenous Paṭ style of Bengal. Although betraying strong Orissan influence and reminiscent of Mughal and ancient Indian conventions, all the elements of folk art are present, story telling, vivid colours, determined brush strokes and broad summary execution. The bold Devanāgarī characters of the text play their part in the general scheme of the pages. The figures are outlined against a white background; they form part of groups. Broad, undulating curves of the Sari drawn around the heads of women outlining their projecting chignons, recall the convention found in the Amaru Śataka manuscript from Mayurbhanj, an Orissan State close to the borders of Midnapur.<sup>1</sup> Elliptical eyes extended to the ear, correspond to contemporary renderings on palm-leaf and paper in Orissa and do not follow the Western Indian mannerism. The figures here are also shown in combined profile and front view. But instead of the supple and Orissan forms they are compact and firm. The strength and vitality of the Orissan style is blended with the suavity of Bengal in this remarkable series of manuscript paintings.

Bengal Art however is not something which is past; it is a continuous and living process. Contemporary scroll paintings or Paṭs of rural Bengal show that traditional art, in its popular version, is still alive in remote regions unaffected by westernised urban culture. It is a matter of no little regret that like all other vestiges of traditional culture it is also fast decaying before the onrush of modern mechanised civilization.

Painted usually on paper, often of the cheapest variety, sometimes on newspapers too, none of the "Jarano-paṭ" or rolled paintings are older than hundred or hundred and fifty years. Most of the Paṭs in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art and G. S. Dutt's collection—the only public institutions in India where these records of popular art are represented—were painted during the last eighty years. Their average

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(1) J. I. S. O. A., Vol. VIII, 1940, Pl. V, 3.



length varies from twelve to sixteen feet ; they are one or two feet broad. The subject matter is invariably religious and devoted to epic cycles, e. g. the Kṛṣṇa līlā, Rāma-līlā, Behulā legend and the Chaitanya līlā. Paṭs are confined mainly to western Bengal. Ghazi-Paṭs or Paṭs pertaining to the Ghazi legend are in vogue among the Muslims in Comilla and Barisal in Eastern Bengal. The long rolls with 10 or 12 separate pictures are arranged in rectangular panels one below the other, "each picture being exhibited by the Paṭua at a time as the roll is gradually unfolded and as the story of each picture is being chanted to the accompaniment of the traditional ballad composed by the Paṭuas themselves".<sup>1</sup> The rectangular panels are either demarcated by plain bands in lighter colours or by floral borders in which rosettes and leaves alternate. Flanking continuous decorative borders at the same time emphasise the interrelation of specific panels.

Unlike the Kanthās<sup>2</sup>, the Paṭs of Bengal are more or less representational and but rarely symbolic. It is obvious that scrolls were painted in the narrative style. The story-telling capacity of ancient Indian art is retained here. We find in the gradual unfolding of the story a continuation of the peculiar technique of Barhut and Sanchi. But in the Paṭs the head is shown in profile, the eye in full view, the trunk also in front view, the legs and feet again in strict or three quarter profile, and the "conformation and movement of the figures and their parts are limited to a few typical shapes."

The Paṭs are distinguished by vigorous lines and vivid colours, such as we have seen in the illustrated Rāmāyaṇa manuscript of Tulsīdās. The Paṭua generally used primary colours, red, blue and yellow. Green and brown were sometimes employed, the former particularly in paintings in the Dumka Sub-Division (Santal Parganas) and the latter in Manbhum district, both areas in Bihar, but culturally part and parcel of Bengal.

Indian red, indigo, burnt sienna and yellow ochre predominate.

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1. G. S. Dutta, *The Indigenous Painters of Bengal*, J. I. S. O. A. Vol. I, p. 21.

2. J. I. S. O. A, Vol. VII, pp. 141-167.











The colours are laid on in flat washes. The classical Indian modelling quality of the line is nowhere apparent except in the Kalighat drawings.

In the earlier scrolls extraneous influence can be detected. An indigenous idiom and freedom of action distinguish only those executed in recent times. Not only in dress, treatment of trees and floral borders but also in their architectural setting too, some of the early nineteenth century Paṭs betray Rajput influence.<sup>1</sup> The Mughal idiom, on the other hand, is distinctly perceptible in at least one old Rāmāyaṇa Paṭ from Bankura, dating back perhaps to the end of the 18th century. There almost the entire design and colour scheme are reminiscent of Mughal conceptions. The panel representing the marriage procession scene of Rāma is typically Mughal in its spacing, movement and grouping.

The Western Bengal Paṭs, in the different districts, show peculiarities in design and colour. It has already been pointed out that the Santhal Parganas prefer figures silhouetted in green, blue and yellow against a white background. Manbhum products are easily recognised by their preference for one particular shade—burnt sienna, relieved by white and yellow patches and a densely packed composition. In Midnapore scrolls, the overcrowded panels have elaborate decorations and a minute finish is given to the scenes, but the seated figures crowning these scrolls are impressive and monumental. It is to be noted that Birbhum, Bankura and Burdwan invariably favour an Indian red background and Hoogly a dark brown. The abstract linear treatment moreover of the Hoogly Paṭs is peculiar. Although neighbours, subtle differences also exist between the Bankura and Birbhum varieties. Linear reduction into straight pleat-like folds of drapery often floriated (Plate X) is a characteristic peculiar to Bankura and present from the earliest times. Moreover the head is seldom represented other than in a sharp and angular profile. Birbhum, on the other hand favours a three quarter view (Plate XII). Another unique feature invariably employed by the Birbhum Paṭua is the conventional

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1. J. I. S. O. A., Vol. I, Pls. IV V, Fig. 1 and 2,



double eyebrow. These and several other traits and stylistic elements help in identifying the products of the many districts.

An examination of some details of the different varieties of Paṭ will now be undertaken. Let us first take up the two panels of a Rāmāyaṇa Paṭ (Pl. X) from Bankura (Asutosh Museum Collection) executed more than fifty years ago. The upper scene represents Rāma, attended by Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumāh worshipping Durgā on the eve of his victory over Rāvaṇa. Set against a flat empty space, the heavy figure of the Goddess dominates the scene by her sudden appearance and animated gesture, contrasting with the rigidly vertical poses of the attentive figures on both sides. The movement and arrangement of her ten hands is followed by the semicircular sweep described by the heads of Rāma and his retinue. Contrary movements of the two distinct groups divided by the Maṅgala Kalaśa, balance the simple but effective composition. One of the critical moments of Rāma's life has found here a dramatic illustration.

The lower panel represents a scene of the epic fight between the Monkey friends of Rāma and the Rākṣaṣas. It is full of dynamic action seldom excelled by the Paṭua anywhere. Two advancing gigantic monkeys, one white, and another dark blue, form the two sides of a triangle an intricate pattern is woven on Indian red ground; dark colours are pitted against light along the diagonal. In the bustle and din of battle, it is difficult to single out the contending parties of soldiers, they are all mixed up in a confused hurly-burly, some charging, others flying, here and there single combats are going on at a distance from the main battle. The men are in every conceivable attitude, running, standing, kneeling, crouching or turning sharply round in the middle of the fight to face the enemy once more. What spaces are left are filled by decapitated heads and detached limbs.

In the Śakti Paṭ from Birbhum, (private collection; Pl. XII) a round Chalachitra controls the upright movement of the Goddess Durgā striding upon a 'super-human' lion and a fallen demon, flanked by Lakṣmī, Saraswatī, Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya and pillars in the background.

Unlike her counterpart from Bankura, the figure of Durgā is tall and rests monumentally on a pyramidal pedestal. Billowing draperies of the











background harmonise with the parallel movement of the numerous hands and vertical pillars act as a foil to the multiple curves of the design. The colour scheme is also noteworthy. The blue garment of the Goddess, between heavy bounding lines, freely applied, lends particular emphasis to the figure of the Goddess, dwarfing all other figures in the group. Shades of blue, indigo, Indian red, yellow, yellow ochre, green and white are all skilfully applied to make this picture vibrate with energy.

A Behulā Paṭ from Midnapur, in the Asutosh Museum collection, with a mastery of spacing and craftsmanship shows on a white ground, patterns in light blue, bounded by curves (Pl. XIIIa).

A Kṛṣṇa-līlā Paṭ from Midnapur, also in the Asutosh Museum (inset on p. 138) is remarkable for its composition. It shows the river Jamunā meandering through the centre of the panels cutting right across miracle scenes performed by Kṛṣṇa in Vrindaban. Crossing herds of cattle and the projecting wings of the Vakāsur interconnect the panels. The peculiar way of showing the river is reminiscent of the Śuṅga technique in stone, on a Sanchi gateway, representing the Nirañjana river and the Mahākapi Jātaka.

Three pert milkmaids, proceeding in uniform style, with pots balanced on their heads (Pl. XIIIb), constitute a delightful scene from a Kṛṣṇa līlā scroll from Dumka, Santhal Parganas (Asutosh Museum collection). It is a matter of no little significance that this was painted only a few years ago and the Paṭua is still living. Drawn on a white background the sharp, clear cut outline is bordered by running dots—a characteristic not noticed elsewhere. The stiff cylindrical, lower portion of the figures supports the circulatory movements of the hands and of the mode of wearing the Sari so that it frames the head in a charming manner; forms like this are to be found only in the Santhal productions from Midnapur and the neighbouring regions. The green of the Saris is matched by the yellow of the bodies and by the green blouses, the middle one being light pink.

A more sophisticated painting is represented by the Kirtan scene from Burdwan district in the Asutosh Museum collection (Pl. XI). The ecstatic figure of Chaitanya occupies the centre of both the front and back rows. Yellow ochre flesh colour shimmers on an Indian



red surface. Brown musical instruments (Dhol) add depth to the colour scheme. Solid round bodies, delineated by gliding curves and intersected by swaying limbs create a rhythmic pattern of intense emotional fervour.







a



b







# THE MYSTERY OF THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS ( SHRĪ BHAGAVATĪ TATTVA )

BY SHRĪ SWĀMĪ KARAPĀTRI-JĪ ( HARIHARĀNANDA SARASVATĪ )

adapted translation by Śhiva Śharana ( Alain Danielou )<sup>1</sup>

सर्वं वै देवा देवीमुपतस्थुः कासि त्वं महादेवी साग्रवीदहं ब्रह्मरूपिणी  
मत्तः प्रकृतिपुरुषात्मकं जगत्

(Devī-atharvā-Śhirā)

"The Gods approaching the resplendent Goddess asked her 'who are you ?' the Arch-Goddess replied 'I am the form of the Unqualified Principle, the Brahman ; from me the world arises as Nature and Person (Prakṛiti-Puruṣhā)."

अथ ह्येनां ब्रह्मरन्ध्रे ब्रह्मरूपिणीमाप्नोति, भुवनाधीश्वरी तुय्यातीता ।

(Bhuvaneśhvari-Upaniṣhad)

"In the Principial Aperture, Brahmarandhrā [behind the forehead], a man finds me the Lady of the Spheres who am the shape of the Principle, beyond the fourth, [the unmanifest], stage."

The dual form, unqualified and qualified, of the All Powerful Goddess is indicated in the first hermetic utterance (Mantrā) of the Devī Bhāgavatā, :

सर्वचैतन्यरूपां तामाद्यां विद्याञ्च धीमहि ।

बुद्धिं या नः प्रचोदयात्

"She is the Universal Consciousness, the Origin of all, She is Sapience, too, the intelligence which instigates intellect."

सा च ब्रह्मस्वरूपा च नित्याः सा च सनातनी ।

यथात्मा च तथा शक्तिर्यथामनो दाहिका स्थिता ॥

अतएव च योगीन्द्रैः स्त्रीपुष्पेदो न मन्यते ।



"She is the intrinsic shape of the Principle, the Brahman, She is eternal, without beginning. Just as the power to burn obtains in fire, so Energy (Śhakti) dwells in the Self, the Atman. Hence the masters of Reintegration, the yogis, do not consider their difference as that of man and woman."

अहमेवास पूर्वन्तु नान्यत्किञ्चिन्नगाधिप ।  
तदात्मरूपं चित्संवित् परब्रह्मैकनामकम् ॥

"I was before all that exists, O King of the Mountains! before me there was nothing. Hence Consciousness, Faculty of Knowing, Supreme Principle, are but the names of the shape of my one Self."

सर्ववेदान्तवेदेषु निश्चितं ब्रह्मवादिभिः ।  
एकं सर्वगतं सूक्ष्मं कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ।  
योगिनस्तत्प्रपश्यन्ति महादेव्याः परं पदम् ।  
परात्परतरं तत्त्वं शाश्वतं शिवमच्युतम् ।  
अनन्तं प्रकृतौ लीनं देव्यास्तत्परमं पदम् ।  
शुभ्रं निरञ्जनं शुद्धं निर्गुणं दैन्यवर्जितम् ।  
आत्मोपलब्धिविषयं देव्यास्तत्परमं पदम् ।

(Kūrmā Purāṇā)

"That essence which the knowers of the Principle see asserted throughout the Eternal Wisdom (the Vedā) and in the End of wisdom (Vedāntā),

that essence which the seekers of Reintegration, the yogis, can perceive as issued from the one all pervading, subtle, changeless, motionless, Arch-Goddess, ever fixed in one point,

that supreme stage, far beyond the beyond, everlasting, is the Lord of Sleep, Śhivā.

This limitless transcendent stage issued from the All-Powerful Goddess dissolves into Nature (Prakṛiti).

This supreme stage issued from the Goddess is white, without disguise, pure, without qualities, sorrowless; it is the object gained by the Self."

#### THE ALL POWERFUL GODDESS AS EXISTENCE-CONSCIOUSNESS-BLISS

Existence, development, and power of enjoyment found throughout the Spatial Universe are the gifts of the All-Powerful Goddess who is intrinsic Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and is the support of the whole



of manifestation and its countless millions of universes. In Her, the Spatial Universe arises, in Her it stands, in Her, in the end, it dissolves.

In a mirror we see reflected the vault of the sky, of the clouds, the globes of Sun and Moon, the movements of the planets, the Earth itself, and, indeed, all that is manifest. Yet, if we try to grasp them, we meet nothing but the glass. Similarly, in the mirror which is the All-Powerful Goddess, the universe appears to exist, and without this mirror of the indivisible, eternal changeless, self-dependent Arch-Consciousness, the Spatial Universe could not be seen.

परा तु सच्चिदानन्दरूपिणी जगदम्बिका ।  
सर्वाधिष्ठानरूपा स्याज्जगदुन्नान्तिश्चिदात्मनि ॥

( Skandā Purāṇā )

"The support of all is the Transcendent ( Parā ) World Mother ( Jagat-ambikā ) whose shape is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. She is the Self of Consciousness in whom appears the fictitious appearance ( भ्रान्ति ) which is the moving Universe".

Some believe that Energy pertains only to the Unconscious, but the word Śhakti ( Energy ), sometimes used for the Unconscious, can also be used for Transcendent Nature ; similarly, the word Bhagavatī ( All-Powerful Goddess ) can convey the notion of the Pure, qualityless power of Consciousness ( Chit-Śhakti ). Neither the Energy, nor the All-Powerful Goddess, worshipped by her devotees should therefore be understood to be merely Nature, or Power of Illusion ; it is the All-Powerful Goddess, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss who is the object of worship.

The Ḍamarā-tantrā explains the meaning of the Navārṇā hermetic utterance.

निर्धूतनिखिलध्वान्ते नित्यमुक्ते परात्परे ।  
अखण्डब्रह्मविद्यायै चित्सदानन्दरूपिणि ॥  
अनुसन्दध्महे नित्यं वयं त्वां हृदयाम्बुजे ।

"O Destroyer of all darkness, Ever liberated, who transcends beyond the beyond. For the sake of impartible Principial-Sapience ( Brahmā-Vidyā ) I search for thy shape as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss in the lotus of my heart".

Bliss, upon which all experiences depend, is the supreme aim of man.



आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति

"All love is desire for the Self", says the Eternal Wisdom.

Therefore Bliss, the intrinsic shape of the Self, is that of which all love is an echo. All this world is an echo of Bliss. That Bliss, too, of which the bliss of men, of celestial musicians (Gāndharvā-s) and the gods among those musicians (devā-gāndharvā-s), of the angels which were from the beginning (ajanajā devā-s), of the ritual angels (śhṛautā devā-s), of the King of Heaven (Indrā), of Brīhaspati, the teacher of the Gods, of Prajāpati, the Lord of the Universe and of Brahmā, the Creator, is but a drop—although the level of joy obtained by each one of these is a hundred times that of the one preceding—that Bliss is called the supremely transcendent Bliss-shape of the Principle.

#### NĀDA BINDU

When cogitation (vimarśhā), illumination (prakāśhā) and energy respectively appear in the Lord of Sleep, Śhivā, then point-limit (bindu), femineity, and principal vibration (nāḍā) (masculinity) respectively come into being. When the fusion is complete like that of milk and water, the united point-limit comes into being. This united point-limit is known as the Primordial Hermaphrodite (Ardhā-narā-Īśhvarā). The mutual attraction towards one another of its two components is called Lust (Kāmā).

सच्चिदानन्दविभवात्संकल्पात्परमेश्वरात् ।

आसीच्छक्तिस्ततो नादो नादाद्बिन्दुसमुद्भवः ।

"From the splendour of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and by the will of Supreme Divinity, Energy, Śhakti, arose, from Śhakti the principal vibration, from the principal vibration the point-limit from which the manifest begins".

The power of action which is found in the principal vibration is the 'I wink' (aham nimeśhā) of the point-limit Bindu. The 'I' (aham) is the stage previous to universal dissolution and is the condensed desire of Energy for creation. In that in which knowledge (i. e. the ascending tendency, Sattvā) is predominant, the expanding tendency Rajas takes the form of Energy-action and the descending tendency takes the form



of the point-limit Bindu. The letter 'A' is the symbol of Śhivā, Lord of Sleep. 'H' is the symbol of Energy (Śhakti). The Belle of the three cities (Tripura Sundarī)<sup>1</sup> is pervaded by the I (Aham) (which is the union of A and H, the first and last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, 'am' being only the inflexion). All creation is filled with individuality and "I"-ness.

The union of the Lord of sleep (Śhivā) and Energy (Śhakti) is the principal vibration, Nāḍā.

यद्यमनुत्तरमूर्तिः निजेच्छया विश्वमिदं स्रष्टुम् ।

पस्पन्दे सस्पन्दः प्रथमः शिवतत्त्वमुच्यते तज्ज्ञैः ॥

"That essence, that transcendent embodiment which by its own will created this world which was the first to vibrate with vibration, knowers call the Lord of Sleep."

The Lord of Sleep embraced by Energy is the seed of the spatial universe. In the radiance of the 'I', the Lord of Sleep remains still and energy is active. She is thus the opposite of Kālī, the Power of Time, and is known as the Lustful, Rati. When the Energy which is cogitation (vimarśhā) dissolves into the Lord of Sleep this is the state of excitement (उन्मना). When she rises again from Him this is the state of calm (समना).

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE SHAPE OF THE PRINCIPLE, THE BRAHMAN

In the Scriptures she is spoken of not only as the Energy but as the very form of the Principle.

अचिन्त्यामिताकारशक्तिस्वरूपा,

प्रतिव्यक्त्यधिष्ठानसत्तैकमूर्तिः ।

गुणातीतनिर्द्वन्द्वोद्यैकगम्या,

त्वमेका परब्रह्मरूपेण सिद्धा ॥

"Thou art the One, realised in the shape of the Principle. Thou art the intrinsic Energy whose form is the Inconceivable and the Infinite. Thou art the embodiment of Existence which is the basis of each individual being. Thou art beyond quality, beyond oppositions, reached only through thought-less knowing (Nirvikalpābodhā)".

1. The Consciousness dwelling in the triple body (causal, subtle and gross) of all beings.



In the *Kenā Upaniṣhad*, the All-Powerful Goddess is described as the shape of Principial Sapience. Through her mercy *Indrā*, the king of Heaven, and other Gods know the intrinsic shape of the Principle. When the Principle disappeared from before him, *Indrā*, with a feeling of shame, remained standing in the emptiness of space and began to perform austerities. After a long time the Goddess, satisfied, appeared.

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानामुमां हैमवतीम् ।

"In this space, spreading everywhere, *Umā* the goddess, shining like gold, appeared as a woman of marvellous beauty".

*Indrā* in the emptiness of space saw the Goddess in the shape of Principial Sapience adorned with golden ornaments and, through her mercy, he realised the Brahman. For those who worship Energy, Energy is everywhere present but those who worship other deities have likewise to worship her.

Without worshipping Energy devotees can never realise the shape of their chosen deity. The *Sanmohinī tantra* says that he who merely worships the dark light *Kriṣṇā* without worshipping the white light *Rādhā* will, in the end, fall.

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE CONSORT OF THE SUPREME PRINCIPLE

In many places the All-Powerful Goddess is described as the Consort of and the giver of enjoyment to the Supreme Principle.

निर्गुणः परमात्मा तु त्वदाश्रयतयास्थितः ।

तस्य भट्टारिकासि त्वं भुवनेश्वरि भोगदा ॥

"The qualityless Supreme Self takes shelter in thee. Thou art the princess whence he derives pleasure, the Lady of the Spheres."

Living beings, Divinity and all other things are the children of this Goddess.

Just as Fire and its power to burn are ever related, as one another's inner nature, so also the Supreme Principle and the Supreme Energy are ever the inner self of the other.

It is from this point of view that she is called *Chāṇḍikā* or *Chāṇḍī*, the Wrathful. In such expressions as चण्डमानुः चण्डवातः 'a wrathful sun, a wrathful wind', the word 'wrathful' (*chāṇḍā*) is used to express



exceptional qualities in things. By being made an attribute of Sun, of wind, the meaning of the word is, however, narrowed. It finds its full scope only when applied to the thing in which there are no distinctions of place or time, and no division, that is, in the Supreme Self.

Etymologically the word *Chandā* means anger ( चडि कीपे ).

कस्य विम्यति देवाश्च कृतरोषस्य संयुगे

"Who is it whose anger even the gods fear."

The man whose anger bears fruit is called '*chandā*' ( violent ). The most fearful anger is also called '*chandā*' and this fearful anger belongs to Supreme Divinity.

नमस्ते रुद्र मन्यवे

"I salute thee, wrath of the Lord of Tears."

In the world, all fear anger, all fear destruction, all fear death which destroys all. So *Śhivā*, the destroyer, is called too *Chandā*, the wrathful.

भीषाद्वातः पवते भीषोदेति सूर्यः ।

भीषास्मादग्निश्चेन्द्रश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥

"By fear of Him doth the wind blow, by fear the sun rises, by fear Fire and *Indrā* do their work, and death ( whom all fear ) fears Him." He is called the death of death, the Time of Time or the Arch-time ( *Mahā-kālā* ). It is he who destroys all. He alone is not counted amongst the millions of the destroyed, and it is only because *Brahmā*, the Creator, and *Viṣṇu*, the Preserver, are aspects of Him, that they too are indestructible. He is called :

महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतम्

"The great fear, the brandished thunderbolt," and the Power which is the intrinsic form of his wrath is his consort *Chandikā*.

But always, alongside the fearful, lies the peaceful aspect of Divinity,

घोरान्या च शिवान्या च

"The one is fearful, the other auspicious";

Wherefore the All Powerful Goddess has two shapes, the one fierce the other peaceful.

Some say that the one supreme Principle, through his power of Illusion, appears in a dual shape as Law and Law-giver.



तदैक्षत बहुस्यां प्रजायेय (Chānd, Up.) "He thought : May I become Many and have subjects."

सोऽकामयत He desired

तत्तपोऽकुरुत he created that heat

We hear, in these revealed utterances, of knowledge, desire and action as the beginning of creation. This is called the triple 'law of the nature' (dharmā) of the Principle. This law is not distinct from the Brahman the law-giver himself. And the revealed utterances speak of it as the law of

### स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबल क्रिया च

"Spontaneous knowledge, strength and action". This (dread) law of the Supreme Nature is called His 'Energy' (Śhakti) and is identified with Chāṇḍī, the Wrathful. It is she who is the Arch-Power of Time Mahā-Kālī, the Arch-Divinity of Fortune, Mahā Lakṣmī, and the Arch-Divinity of Knowledge Mahā Sarasvatī according to the work she performs. Truly to see in this Supreme Wrath a male or a female character depends only upon the inclination of the worshipper. In male terms she is spoken of as the Arch Lord of Tears (Mahā-Rudrā), etc., in female terms as the Wrath (Chāṇḍī), the 'Goddess-Beyond-Reach' (Durgā), etc.

### THE THREE TALES IN THE HYMN TO THE GODDESS-BEYOND-REACH (DURGĀ SAPTĀSHATI) THE FIRST TALE

Knowledge of the essence of things is obtained by the mercy of the All-Powerful Goddess. Knowledge (jñānā) is everywhere praised. Where is knowledge, ignorance, delusion, etc., disappear. To attain knowledge one listens and ponders. Repetition of sacred formulae, austerities, sacrificial rites, all have but one object ; the attainment of knowledge. But this knowledge is not what is ordinarily meant by the word. Knowledge of the objects of words and (the senses) is common to all living creatures. Men have, relatively to all other beings, a greater aptitude for knowledge, yet ignorance too dwells in them. That knowledge of proper behaviour is found in animals just as in men, that birds like men, even when hungry themselves, will bring



food to their little ones, is a matter of common knowledge. But the basic ignorance of the world is not thereby lifted.

It is the influence of the Arch-Power of Illusion ( Mahā Māyā ) which prevents the basis of all, the self-illuminated Principle from being cognized. She forcibly deceived the minds of even Vaśhiṣṭhā, Bharatā, Viśhvāmitrā and other seers who were soaked in the knowledge of the Upaniṣhads. She manifests the world, animate and inanimate. Being pleased, she, in the guise of Sapience, is the giver of liberation, while, shaped as Ignorance, she is the cause of worldly ties. She is said to be the sleep of Reintegration ( yogā-nidrā ) of the All-Powerful Viṣṇu when, at the end of the Aeon, he splendidly rests on the Lord Remainder ( Śheṣhā. ) The Earth, which rests on the back of the tortoise, was then sinking into the primeval waters and becoming soft as butter. Thinking that this earth could no longer support living beings when the time of creation were to come the All-Powerful Goddess by her Power called the 'Sleep of Reintegration' put the Pervader Viṣṇu to sleep. She then took some dirt out of his left ear with the end of the nail of her little finger and, with it, made the genie ( daityā ) Madhu ( Honey ). With the dirt of his right ear she made the genie Kaitabhā. At first these two genii appeared like worms but later they became very powerful. When the resplendent Goddess disappeared having granted them a boon, both saw the Lord Creator Brahmā in the lotus springing from the navel of the Pervader Viṣṇu. Seeing Brahmā they said : "We shall kill you. If you want to live you must wake up Viṣṇu. Hearing this Brahmā began with many hymns of praise, to pray to the Sleep of Reintegration. The All-Powerful Goddess, being pleased, told him to ask for a boon. Brahmā asked that the Lord be awakened and the two genii trapped. The Mother woke up Viṣṇu who thereafter fought fiercely with these genii for five thousand years. Misled by the Arch-Power of Illusion these two genii, intoxicated with pride, told Viṣṇu to ask for a boon. Viṣṇu said—"I ask as a boon that you both may be killed by me." They answered. Be it so, you can kill us, but only on such soil as is not permeated with water. Viṣṇu, placing their heads at the joint of his thigh, cut them off with his discus. Later, making an ointment with their fat ( medā ) he applied it to parts of



the Earth which then became solid. That is why the earth is also called Medinī.

In this way the All-Powerful Goddess, appearing under all sorts of shapes, sustains the world. She it is who creates, protects, destroys. She, becoming the sleep of Reintegration, gives rest to the Preserver Viṣṇu. She it is who satisfies the Gods (Devatā) the Fore-Fathers and the Ritual Angels (Śrautā Devā) by taking the shape of the Utterances of offering ( स्वाहा, स्वधा, वषट्कार ) respectively connected with them. She is most fearful, holding a sword, a spear, a mace, a discus, a conch, a bow, an arrow, a missile ( bhuṣṇuṇḍi ) and an iron club. But she is also the supreme peace-giver. She is a leader of soldiers ( सैन्यतरा ), yet she is the most beautiful of all things beautiful. She can truly appear most lovely to her devotees, although infinitely horrible and cruel to the Demons ( Daityā-s ). She is most beautiful among all that causes joy. She is higher than the Creator Brahmā and all the gods. Verily, in the world, wherever and whenever something is—whether real or unreal, conscious or unconscious, effect or cause—and has an energy, that energy is the All-Powerful Goddess.

यच्च किञ्चित्कचिद्वस्तु सदसद्वाखिलात्मिके ।

तस्य सर्वस्य या शक्तिः सा त्वं किं स्तूयसे तदा ॥

"How canst thou praise this Energy which dwells in whatever exists, in all things whether real or unreal."

When the Supreme Divinity (Paramā Īśhvarā), who, through Arch-Energy, brings forth, protects and destroys the moving universe, is himself in the power of the All-Powerful Goddess, who can hymn the qualities of this Energy which is the sleep of Reintegration? It is through the greatness of this Energy that Viṣṇu and the other gods take a body. This All-Powerful Goddess who possesses an infinitude of powers, who is predominantly joy, is described under the shape of the Arch-Power of Time (Mahā Kālī).

#### THE SECOND TALE

Sometimes the Goddess appears as the Arch-divinity of Fortune (Mahā Lakṣmī). Once, for a full hundred years a fearful war was



fought between the Gods and Titans (Asurās). The King of the Titans was Mahiṣhāsura, the Buffalo-Titan, and the King of the Gods was Indra, the Resplendent. Mahiṣhāsura having defeated all the gods himself became king of Heaven. The Gods, vanquished, then went, led by Brahmā, to Viṣṇu and Śhivā and explained in detail the victory of Mahiṣhāsura and their defeat. Hearing the story of the Gods, both the Destroyer of Madhu (Madhusūdanā=Viṣṇu) and the Giver of Peace (Śhaṅkarā=Śhivā) were incensed and a great flame sprang from their mouths. A similar flame sprang from the mouth of Brahmā too. From the bodies of Indra, Varuṇā and the other gods a divine light shone forth. In this way, the Arch-flame coming out from the bodies of all the gods looked like a mountain. And all the points of the compass were pervaded with its radiance. This incomparable light condensed itself and took the shape of a woman. Her brilliance filled the three worlds. This light, sprung from all the gods, had many limbs. Seeing the wonderful Goddess, made of the radiance of the gods, all rejoiced. All the gods, gave her their weapons and armaments. All honoured her as the Mother. She, pleased, began to roar like a tiger. Her fearful roar filled the whole heavenly sphere. At its echo the worlds shrank and the sea trembled. The gods in their delight shouted 'Victory Victory' and the sages sang her praise. Seeing this, the Titans seizing their weapons and missiles made ready for war. Mahiṣhāsura, the Buffalo King surrounded by many Titans faced the Goddess who stood filling the three worlds with her radiance, forcing the earth to give way under the strength of her feet; her diadem reached to the vault of space, she made the nether world shrink at the twanging of her bow, and filled the directions of space with her thousand arms. The Titans then began the war. A fearful battle followed. The earth was so littered with fallen elephants, horses and Titans it was impossible to move. A river of blood frightful to behold began to flow. As the battle went on the biggest weapons, missiles and energies were brought into play. Many the Goddess destroyed with her weapons and many too simply with her war cry (Houn!) alone. The Goddess's lion in a strange battle, killed Chāmarā and other Titans. After many of his warriors had been killed, Mahiṣhāsura himself, in his



buffalo shape, showed wonderful prowess. Chāṇḍikā snared him with a noose but he changed himself into a lion. While Chāṇḍikā was attempting to cut his head off with her sword he became a man, sword-in-hand. When the Mother ran at the man, he became an elephant. As an elephant he began to drag away her lion with his trunk. The Goddess cut off the trunk with her sword. Then again changing into a buffalo he began to terrorise the three worlds. Finally the Goddess climbed onto his back and, striking him with her feet, pierced him with her spear. Then in the shape of a Titan (Asurā) half issuing from the mouth of the buffalo he began to fight. In the end, the Mother with an enormous sword cut off his head. Great lamentations then rose from the army of the Titans. But the Gods rejoiced greatly and, in humble respect, began to praise the Mother, saying : "O Mother ! Thou art the energy soul of the moving universe. The whole Spatial universe is pervaded by thee. Thou embodiest the combined power of all the gods. What thou canst achieve neither the Pervader Viṣṇu, the Creator Brahmā nor the Resorber of the World (Harā = Śhivā) can do, let alone others. In the shape of Fortune, thou dwellest in the homes of those who act righteously, but in the houses of the sinful thou dwellest in the guise of poverty. Thou art the good intellect of the intelligent, the modesty of noble women. Thou art Nature (Prakṛiti) called, too, the Unmanifest (Avyakṛitā). It is thou in the shape of the ritual utterances of offering, who satisfiest Gods and Forefathers. It is thou whom ascetics, seekers of Liberation, worship as Principial Sapience (Brahmā Vidyā). For the spatial universe to progress and attain beatitude, thou appearest in the three forms of Divinity. Thou dwellest in the heart of the Pervader Viṣṇu as the Arch-divinity of Fortune (Mahā Lakṣmī). And, in the heart of Him who has the moon on his forehead (शशिमौलि = Śhivā), thou dwellest in the shape of the Fair Lady Gaurī. Having greatly praised her, the gods begged the goddess for boons. Saying: 'be they granted', the Mother disappeared.

### THIRD TALE

When, through the valour of the Daimons Śhumbhā and



Niśhumbhā, the three worlds were snatched from Indrā, the king of Heaven, the Daimons began to take a share from all ritual sacrifices. They also attributed to themselves the posts of Sun and Moon and those of guardian of the treasure (Kuberā), Lord of the Waters (Varuṇā). Then the gods, defeated and misruled, began in their hearts to call upon the never-defeated All-Powerful Goddess. The Mother had once granted them the boon that, whenever in their troubles they thought of her, their troubles would at once disappear. Remembering this, they all went to the Snow Mountain the Himā-achalā and began to praise her who is the Power of Illusion of the Pervader Viṣṇu.

While the gods were praising her, the daughter of the mountain Lord, the Lady of the Mountain, Pārvatī, came to take her bath in the Ganges. She asked the Gods "Which deity are you praising"? The Gods had no time to answer. From the body of the Lady of the Mountain, the All-Powerful Lady of Sleep (Śhivā) sprang forth and said "Having been dethroned by Śhumbhā, they are all praising me." Because she sprang from the body-sheath of Pārvatī, the Mother became known in the world as Kauśhikī "the Sheathed". When Kauśhikī came out of her, Pārvatī became black. Hence is she called Kālikā (the black one).

Once Chāṇḍā (Impetuous) and Muṇḍā (Mean), servants of Śhumbhā, and Niśhumbhā, saw the Mother Kauśhikī looking marvellously beautiful. They went to their masters, praised her form, and suggested that they should catch her. So Śhumbhā and Niśhumbhā sent a messenger to her saying: "Our orders are nowhere disobeyed. All the jewels of the world as well as the royal elephant (Airavatā) and royal stallion (Uch' aihśhravā) are in our possession. You are the jewel of women, we hunger for jewels, come to us and enjoy supreme magnificence." The Goddess with a grave smile replied:

यो मां जयति संग्रामे यो मे दप" व्यपोहति ।  
 यो मे प्रतिबलो लोके स मे भर्ता भविष्यति ।  
 तदागच्छतु शुम्भोऽथ निशुम्भो वा महासुरः ।  
 मां जित्वा किं चिरेणात्र पाणिं गृह्णातु मे लघु ।

"He who defeats me in battle, who abates my pride, who is in the world my equal in strength, he will be my Lord. Let Śhumbhā come



here, or Nishumbhā the great Asurā. Why does he delay his conquest of me. They should find it easy to gain my hand".

The messenger did his best, but the Goddess said : "What can I do ? That is my vow." The messenger returned and repeated all that had been said. Then Smoke-eyed (Dhumrā-lochanā) was sent and was killed after a fierce combat. Then Shumbhā sent Chanda and Munda, and a great fight ensued. The Mother became angry and, from her forehead, the dark Kālī of fearful features appeared, and began to eat the army of Daimons. Throwing into her mouth the largest elephants, horses, chariots and warriors she began to crunch them up. Seeing the disaster, Chanda came forward to shower upon Kālī all sorts of missiles, but only to see all his discusses disappear into the mouth of the Goddess. With her Arch-sword the Goddess cut off the head of Chanda. Munda came forward to fight, but shared the same fate.

Kālī took the two heads of Chanda and Munda and went to give them to Kauṣhikī. Because she had brought the two heads of Chanda and Munda, Kauṣhikī named Kālī Chāmunda<sup>1</sup>. Hearing of the death of Chanda and Munda Shumbhā commanded all his army to fight. The most fearful Daityās of the greatest families came, and a terrible war began. The Goddess filled the earth and the sky with the twang of her bow. The roar of the Lion and the clanging on gongs spread everywhere. The great Kālī opening wide her mouth gave a terrible cry. Hearing this cry, the Daityās surrounded her on all sides. But, so that the Daityās might be destroyed and the gods uplifted there sprang from the bodies of Brahmā, Shiva, Vishnu, Indra, and all the gods their energies who raced to the rescue of the Goddess. Rudra, the Lord of Tears, approached, surrounded by all these Energies and said to the wrathful Goddess Chandikā 'To please me kill these Daityās, every one'. When the Goddess

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1. The Name Chāmunda given to the Goddess describes the mental state which exists in the principle beyond change (निर्विकल्प ब्रह्मकार) and which is the cause of liberation. That which, destroying the army (chamu) of misfortune, etc., takes the form of the Self is the Principal Sapience (Brahmā Vidyā) called Chāmunda. This All-Powerful Goddess controls the demons Chanda and Munda who are 'Root-ignorance' and 'ignorance of relative values' (tulā-ajñāna).



heard these words a most fearful energy appeared from her body and spoke to the Lord of Tears : "Go as our ambassador to Śhumbhā and Niśhumbhā and tell them to give back the three worlds to Indrā and to let the gods enjoy the offerings given in sacrifices. Tell them that if they care to live they should go to the nether world. But if in the pride of their strength, they wish to fight, they may come and let our jackals feed on their flesh." The Goddess made Śhivā, the Lord of sleep, her messenger, hence is she called Śhivādūtī (She whose messenger is Śhivā). The Daityās, hearing from Śhivā the message of the Goddess were incensed. They came up to her and hurled their weapons and missiles at her. As if it were child's play, the Goddess destroyed them all. Walking in front of Kauṣhikī, with spear and skull-club, Kālī destroyed her enemies. (The energies of the Gods), Brahmāṇī (the Power of Brahmā), Maheshvarī (the Power of Śhivā), Vaiṣṇavī (the Power of Viṣṇu), Kaumārī (the Power of the Lord of War Kārttikeyā), Aindrī (the Power of Indrā) etc., with their weapons began to kill the Daimons by the thousand. The four points of the compass were filled with the noise of the killing. Having been decimated by the Mother, the Titans were fleeing when a great Asurā named Blood-Seed (raktā-bījā) arrived on the scene. Whenever a drop of the blood of this Blood-Seed fell to the ground another Blood-Seed sprang up. Seizing his club, Blood-Seed began to fight the Energy of Indrā. There was a fearful battle. The world became filled with countless Blood-Seeds. Then the Goddess spread her tongue on the ground and started to lap up the blood, and the Daityā, thus losing all his blood, in the end succumbed.

Then Śhumbhā and Niśhumbhā themselves fiercely fought the Goddess. After a great battle Niśhumbhā was killed. Then Śhumbhā came up to the Goddess and threatened her.

"Ho there ! Durgā, Goddess beyond-reach ! be not so proud. You fight with the power of others". The Goddess then retorted :

एकैवाहं जगत्पतं द्वितीया का ममापरा  
पश्येता दुष्ट मय्येव विशन्त्यो मद्विभूतयः ॥  
ततः समस्तास्ता देव्यो ब्रह्मणीप्रमुखा लयम् ।  
तस्या देव्यास्तनौ जग्मुरेकैवासीत्तदाम्बिका ॥

"I stand alone. Who besides me exists in this world. Behold,



villain, all these, who are my display dissolve into me. Then Brahmāṇī and all the Goddesses dissolved. And when all the Goddesses had re-entered her body, the mother stood alone."

The Goddess said "To my own glory I existed in many forms. Having now resorbed all, I stand alone for battle. Beware." And there, before all the Gods, a great battle took place between the Goddess and Śhumbhā. The greatest and most supernatural weapons were brought into play. This most astounding of wars took place, sometimes in the sky, sometimes on the earth. And at the end of the great fight the All-Powerful Goddess, piercing Śhumbhā's heart with an enormous spear, brought him down, dead, upon the earth. The Gods and Seers praised the Goddess. "O Mother, thou removest the troubles of all beings, thou art the mother of the egg-shaped Universe, thou art the divinity of all the spatial Universe, animate or inanimate. Taking the shape of the earth thou art the support of all. As water thou refreshes the world. Thou art the Energy of Viṣṇu of limitless virile power. Thou art the Power of Illusion seed of the Universe. The whole world exists deluded by thy magic. Pleased thou becomest the cause of liberation. All the Sciences ( Vidyā ) of the world are part of thee. All women too are part of thee. The whole world is filled by thee alone. Who therefore can praise thee. The means of praise, the Voice ( Vāk ) itself, unmanifest ( parā ) or manifest ( aparā ), is but thine own self. Thou art the giver of heaven and of liberation. In the form of Intellect thou art the giver of the four aims of human life. In the form of Time thou art the giver of results. When all dissolves thou alone remainest as the Night of Time ( kālā-rātri ). Thou art the giver of all happiness, the means of all realisation, devoted to those who come to thee for shelter. Thou art the maker of creation, etc. Everlasting, in whom dwell all qualities Thou art made of qualities always willing to remove pain and misery, from those who seek thy protection. The Remover of suffering thou art the Power of the Creator, the Power of the Arch-Lord ( Śhivā ), the Power of Viṣṇu the Pervader, the Power of the Lord of War ( Kaumari ), the Power of the boar ( Varāhī ), the Destroyer of misfortunes ( Chāmuṇḍā ), the Divinity of Fortune ( Lakṣmī ), thou art



Modesty (Lajjā), Sapience ( Vidyā ), Respect ( Śhraddhā ), Health ( Puṣṭi ), the Offering to the Father ( Svadhā ), the Arch-Night ( Mahā rātri ), Arch-Sapience ( Mahā-Vidyā ), Power ( Medhā ), the Polar Star ( Dhruvā ), the Divinity of Learning ( Sarasvatī ), the Best ( Varā ), Existence ( Bhūti ), ( i. e. the ascending tendency ), the expanding tendency ( Vābhravī = Rājasī ), and the Descending tendency ( Tāmasī ). Thou art the Law-giver ( नियन्ता ). Wherever words may reach thee, thou art the shape of all, the coordination of all energies. Mayst thou and thy weapons preserve us from all fear. Thou dwellest in all meanings, fulfil all desires, deserve all praise. Those who shelter in thee know not misfortune. Those who shelter in thee are the shelter of others. Thou art the Divinity of the spatial universe ( Viśhveśhvari ), the Protector of the Universe ( Viśhvā-Pālinī ), the very shape of the Universe ( Viśhvā-rūpā ). To thee the Lord of the Universe bows. Those who bow to thee are the refuge of the Universe."

The Goddess was pleased, and told them to ask for a boon. The Gods replied : "O Goddess of all that exists, for ever free the three worlds of obstacles and from time to time destroy the Daimons as thou hast now done." The Goddess said : These, Śhumbhā and Niśhumbhā and the other Daimons, will again appear in the 28th cycle of 4 Yugās. Then, too, in the house of Nandā the Cowherd, born of Yaśhodā, I, in the shape of she who dwells in the Vindhyā hills, shall destroy them. Under that shape, I shall kill all the Demons assembled, and devour them. My teeth will be so full of blood that I shall be called Raktā-dantikā, She of the blood-stained teeth. Again after a hundred years of drought, I will appear this time as the Hundred-eyed Goddess Śhatakṣhī and will show mercy to the Sages ( munis ). Because I shall protect the world with leaves sprung from my body to sustain life, I shall be called Śhākambharī, The leaf-bearing Goddess. In that incarnation I shall kill the Daityā Durgamā and thus be named Durgā. Then, taking a terrifying shape I shall devour the Daityās who dwell in the snow mountains ( Himāchalā ), and I shall be named Bhīmā, the Terrible. Next taking the shape of a bee I shall kill the Red Demon ( Aruṇāsurā ) and be named Bhrāmari ( the bee ). In this way, whenever the Dānavās make any difficulties I shall incarnate and weaken the enemies of



Eternal Law and of the Gods. Whoever praises and worships me with this hymn I will remove his troubles and give him all he desires.

#### SHE WHOSE SHAPE IS NIGHT

In the 'hymns to Night' (Rātrī Suktā) the meaning of the Divinity of night is set forth.

There are two Divinities of night, related the one to the mortal being, the other to the Divine being. The one is experienced by all the spheres and, in relation with her, all activities come daily to rest. The other night is that in which the activity of Divinity also comes to rest. It is called the Arch-destruction, the intrinsic form of the Power of Time. Nothing then remains except the Principle, the Brahman, chequered with His 'Power of Illusion' (Māyā). This state is also called 'the Unmanifest' (Avyaktā).

ब्रह्मायात्मिका रात्रिः परमेश्वरात्मिका ।

तदधिष्ठातृदेवी तु भुवनेशो प्रकीर्तिता ॥

(Devī Purāṇā)

"Night has for her substance the union of the Supreme Principle with His Power of Illusion, i. e. Night has for substance the dissolution of Supreme Divinity. Her presiding deity is celebrated as the Goddess of the Spheres (Bhuvanā-Īśhī)."

The gist of the passage beginning with

रात्री व्यस्यदायती पुरुषा देव्यक्षिभिः विश्वा ।

etc., is that the

All-Powerful Power of Consciousness, cause of all things, seeing the immaturity of living beings—i. e. the tendency of their good and bad actions to give results—and that the time is not yet come for their bearing fruit, dissolves into itself the universe, the manifestation of Divinity. Later, when the time comes, this very Power of Consciousness, whose shape is night, remanifests the Universe beginning with the Arch-Principle (Mahat), the Intellect Totality. Clearly and individually She sees the former deeds of each being and then only can she give to each the fruits of his actions. Thus does the All Powerful Goddess in her shape as night show her all-knowingness.



This immortal Goddess fills with her form the spatial Universe ( Viṣhvā ) limited by the sphere of space. She fills the humbler species with basic 'faculty of consciousness' ( chaitanyā ) the creepers and shrubs as well as the lofty trees, and this very Goddess, who is transcendent Consciousness ( chit ) through the light of the faculty of Consciousness, which is the reflection of the tendencies of her own nature, brings to light the manifest universe ( prapañchā ) based upon darkness.

The coming night whose nature is play ( देवमशील ) disregards the twilight ( Uṣhā ) which is but a reflection of the Power of Consciousness, that is the veiling power ( Avaraṇā-śakti ) of Ignorance ( Avidyā ). It seems impossible that Night can drive away twilight, whose nature is light, but she is Absolute Night, shape of Consciousness itself, supremely resplendent. By comparison with her twilight and dawn are but obscurity : Just as dawn disappears on the rising of the Sun so the veiling power of Ignorance dissolves when illumined by the Power of Consciousness. When the Veiling power is consumed to its root, and the 'previous deeds' ( prārabdhā ) have ceased to act, then darkness which is the root of Un-knowing ( mūlā-ajñānā ) is for ever destroyed.

May this Divinity of Night this transcendent Power of Consciousness, be pleased with us, so that we may nestle in happiness as birds in their nests at night. Dwellers in the village, their cows and horses, the birds of the air and those men who travel on many a business, jackals and wild beasts, all enter this night and joyfully nestle in her ; for to all beings misguided by the journey of the day she brings happiness. Then all comes to rest. Even those beings who have never heard the name of the Lady of the spheres ( Bhuvanā-Īśhvarī ), come, to her lap, where, by the mercy of the kind mother, they sleep happily as any healthy, unconscious child. Merciful art thou, Oh Power of Consciousness ! O enfolding Darkness ( Ūrmyā ) ! O Divinity of Night, Supremely merciful ! Overlook our deeds, withdraw us from the killers who would harm us, the he-wolf that is sin and the she-wolf that is never-ending desire. Remove us from lust and the other passions which rob us of wisdom and wealth, and be unto us as a ship of gladness to bring us to the opposite shore and lead us to beatitude.



We are surrounded by un-knowing. Its dark colour spreads over all things. O Divinity of dawn! redeem us from this un-knowing as if it were a debt. Thou who remittest the debts of those who praise thee, remove thou our ignorance. O Divinity of Night! Power of Consciousness! thou who, like the cow of abundance, art the giver of all that is desired to thee, I turn praising thee and repeating thy name. Thou art the very shape of light, and daughter of the Supreme Self."

#### THE ALL-POWERFULL GODDESS AS ENERGY (ŚHAKTI)

From the point of view of the theory of non-dual energy (Śhaktā advaitā), light whose shape is pure knowing is considered to be the Lord of Sleep (Śhivā tattvā). The cogitation (Vimarśhā) that takes place in this light is Energy (Śhakti): Together with light, the existence of an energy of thought-form is a necessity. Without light there could be no thought and without thought no light, thought must remain at every stage. This is the theory of non-dual Energy but from the point of view of the End of Wisdom (Vedāntā) there can exist limitless, changeless light even without thought. This theory of non dual energy however, goes so far as to say that, even when the veils of ignorance and the mental notion arising from the Arch utterances in the shape of the Supreme Principle, are removed thought remains of itself as an oriented motion.

The All-Powerful Goddess who is Energy (Śhakti) is the innermost nature of the All-Powerful.

विष्णुशक्तिः परा ज्ञेया क्षे तज्ज्ञाख्या तथापरा ।  
अविद्या कर्मसंज्ञान्या तृतीया शक्तिरिष्यते ॥

"Viṣṇu is the transcendent energy; he who is called the knower of the field<sup>1</sup> is the non-transcendent; the third, the energy to act, is called Ignorance."

The Pervader Viṣṇu and the 'Knower of the field' are here also called Energies, Energies are many, but the principal ones are the Power of

1. The field is the body.



Delight ( Ahladinī Śhakti ) which dwells in the Bliss part of the Supreme Principle, the Power of Perception ( Samvit ) which dwells in the Consciousness part, and the power of coordination ( Sandhinī ) which dwells in the Existence part. The knower of the field stands on the dividing line ( between inner and outer energy ) and the Power of Illusion is the outer Energy.

The great Teacher Śhaṅkarāchāryā says—The Divine giver of Happiness Śhaṅkarā has but an old bull to ride on, only bhang ( hashish ), dhaturā and other poisons to eat, the open spaces for his dwelling, cremation-grounds for his playground, an elephant-hide for his garment. All the splendours of his Divine Power he owes to his association with the All-Powerful Goddess. The Divine magnificence of the Giver of Happiness he owes to the grace of the goddess.

भवानि त्वत्पाणिग्रहणपरिपाटीफलमिदम् ।

( Śhaṅkarāchāryā ; Devīstotrā )

“By taking thy hand, O Lady of the Spheres, he gained this”.

The purport of such teachings is that without Energy the motionless Brahman can do nothing, has not even any magnificence.

शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्तज्ज्ञानगोचराः ।

यतोऽतो ब्रह्मणस्तास्तु सर्गाद्या भावशक्तयः ॥

“Energies unknown to all the worlds are realized through knowledge. In creation and other states they exist as the Energies of the thoughts of the Principle.”

The Energy and he who possesses it are inseparable.

It is usual, to respect power itself more than him to whom it belongs. The intelligent without his intelligence, the powerful without his power, the craftsman without his craft are of no value. There is no interest in sugar without sweetness, in a flower without fragrance, in a lovely woman without beauty, or a noble woman without nobility of character.

Without Energy the whole manifestation would remain as a dead shell. An individual without strength, a society without strength, a race without strength, a country without strength, are a dead weight ;



strength, energy, are everywhere worshipped. In every thing in the world there is the energy to perform its function. In this lies the value of things. Supreme Divinity has the energy to give rise to an infinitude of things. Divinity is in itself devoid of energy ; and in proportion to its association with energy life springs forth. The quality of being Divine appears in that in which there is most energy. It is only when the qualityless, shapeless, motionless Supreme principle, the Brahman becomes spotted through and through by the Arch-Energy, which is the centre of limitless energies, that he is able to create, maintain and destroy the universe. If he is not acted upon by energy then Śhivā, the Lord of Sleep, remains unable to create or destroy, powerless as a corpse. Thus, the divinity of Divinity has its root in Energy. Who can describe the greatness of that Energy in contact with which motionless Consciousness becomes Divinity ?

एवात्मशक्तिः एषा विश्वमोहिनी "She is the Energy of the Self, She it is who enchants the world."

There are limitless energies. Amongst them some are considered to be more important than others and to deserve special worship. These have great purpose both in this life and for transcendent realisation.

In the dense ocean of creation the All-Powerful-Goddess is the ruler of countless energies : of felicity ( *nivṛitti* ), of support ( *pratiṣṭhā* ); of sapience ( *vidyā* ), of peace ( *śhānti* ), of radiance ( *indhikā* ), of light ( *dīpikā* ), of splendour ( *rochikā* ), of Freedom ( *mochikā* ), of the Beyond ( *parā* ), of the subtle ( *sukṣhmā* ), of subtle ambrosia ( *sukṣhmāmritā* ), of nectar of knowledge ( *jñānāmritā* ), of ambrosia ( *amritā* ); of penetration ( *apyayinī* ), of pervasion ( *vyāpinī* ), of the sky shape ( *vyomā rūpā* ); of sharpness ( *tikṣhṇā* ), of limitlessness ( *Anantā* ); of creation ( *Sriṣṭi* ), of debt ( *Riddhi* ); of remembrance ( *Smṛiti* ), of mental imprint ( *medhā* ); of glow ( *kānti* ), of fortune ( *lakṣhmī* ), of light ( *dyuti* ), of duration, ( *sthiti* ), of attainment ( *siddhi* ), of the unconscious ( *jaḍā* ), of protection ( *pālīnī* ), of magnificence ( *aiśhvaryā* ), of lust ( *rati* ), of lustfulness ( *kantā* ), of the granter of boons ( *varadā* ), of rejoicing ( *ahladinī* ); of love ( *prīti* ), of length ( *dirghā* ), of fearfulness ( *Raudrā* ), of sleep ( *nidrā* ), of drowsiness ( *tandrā* ), of hunger ( *kṣudhā* ), of anger ( *krodhinī* ), of satisfaction ( *tuṣṭi* ), of strength ( *puṣṭi* ), of fortitude ( *dhṛiti* ), of moonlight ( *chandrikā* ) etc.



Some speak of an inner aspect of Energy as opposed to the Power of Illusion ( *Māyā* ), Nature ( *Prakṛiti* ), Ignorance ( *Avidyā* ), etc. which are its outer forms. The inner aspect of divine energy would form the divine world, divine personifications, etc., while the outer would manifest the moving Universe.

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE MERCIFUL

Mercy is found in the Lord of Sleep *Śhivā*, in the Pervader *Viṣṇu*, and in all deities ; but the supreme giver of happiness, the supremely merciful, is the Mother, our Lady, *Ambā*. She is merciful even to her ungrateful sons.

कुपुत्रो जायेत कचिदपि कुमाता न भवति

"Although she sometimes gives birth to bad sons, she is never a bad mother."

Although she may fight her enemies with skill mercy yet remains in the heart of the Mother towards them. Purifying them with her arrows, she sends them to heavenly worlds. Verily all are the sons of the Mother. Who can be her enemy ?

चित्ते कृपा समरनिष्ठुरता च दृष्टा ।

( *Durgā Saptashatī* )

"Thy mind shows forth thy mercy, battle thy skill."

Even the ill-behaved *Rāvaṇā* was given advice by the Mother, in the form of *Sītā*, the daughter of *Janakā*, to seek shelter in the Lord. It is but proper that the Mother disregarding the ill deeds of the evil doer should attempt to lead him to the way of truth. If by the fire of her penance, the Mother was able to cool the fire which was burning *Hanumān* :

Could She not, indeed, reduce *Rāvaṇā* to ashes ? But she said :

भसन्देशात्तु रामस्य तपसश्चानुपालनात् ।

न त्वां कुमि दशग्रीव भस्म भस्माहं तेजसा ॥

( *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇā Sundarā Kāṇḍā* )

"Since I did not ask the advice of my Lord *Rāmā*, and because I



am practising austerities, O Ten-headed one, I shall not reduce thee to ashes with my fearful fire".

After the victory of Laṅkā, Hanumān brought to the Daughter of Janakā the good news and asked permission to punish the Demonesses who had tormented her. But the Mother said :

कार्यं कारुण्यमार्येण न कश्चिन्नापराध्यति

"The duty of the well-born is mercy ; none is guiltless. While they were in the power of Rāvaṇā they tormented me, now they trouble me not. We must be kind to them".

पितेव त्वत्प्रेयाज्जननि परिपूर्णांगसि जने,  
हितस्रोतोवृत्त्या भवति च कदाचित्कलुषधीः ।  
किमेतन्निर्दोषः क इह जगतीति त्वमुचितै-  
रुपायैर्विज्ज्ञापि स्वजनयासि माता तदसि नः ॥

"You, O Mother ! are able to appease the Father when for their sake he is angry with your guilty but beloved sons. You appease him, saying, with good reason, 'who is without fault in this world ?' This is because you are our mother".

नित्यं विश्वं वशयति हरिर्निग्रहानुग्रहाभ्याम् ।

आद्ये शक्तिं विघटयति ते हन्त कारुण्यपूरः ॥

"The Remover of Pain ( Hari ) keeps the world under his control, but your mercy ever keeps under control the power of chastisement. The flow of your mercy annihilates this power."

शौरिश्चकास्ति हृदयेषु शरीरभाजां,  
तस्यापि देवहृदयं त्वमनुप्रविष्टा ।  
पद्मे तवापि हृदये प्रथते दयेयं,  
त्वामेवं जाग्रदखिलातिशयां श्रयामः ॥

"In the hearts of all those who have a body the Dark Lord Kṛṣṇā is ever present. But you dwell in his divine heart and the lotus of your heart is prime mercy. Therefore we come for shelter to you who transcends all."

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS THE LEAFLESS CREEPER

The great Teacher Śhaṅkarāchāryā tells us that in this world many pay great respect to and honour the creeper of the aeons with



its numberless leaves (Saparnā); but, he adds, there exists another creeper without leaves (Aparnā), which is the Lady of the Mountain Pārvatī covered by which the old dry tree trunk (the Supreme Person) becomes the giver of the unrivalled fruit of Beatitude. It is this leafless creeper which should be worshipped.

The worship of the Leafless Goddess (Pārvatī) brings even more extraordinary results than that of the many leafed creeper of the aeons, for the creeper of the aeons though it may yield fruits, cannot give liberation, whereas the leafless Goddess covering the old dry tree trunk, gives even the fruit of liberation itself. What greater thing can be said of her?

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE ENERGY OF DELIGHT

According to the Agastyā Samhitā, the All-Powerful Lord of sleep Śhivā to obtain sight of Rāmā the Charming performed great austerities and did worship. Pleased, the Lord Rāmā said to him: If thou wished to know my inner nature, thou shouldst worship my transcendent Energy of Delight (Āhladinī Śhakti); without her I stand nowhere.

आह्लादिनीं परां शक्तिं स्तूयाः सात्वतसंमताम्,  
तदाराध्यस्तदारामस्तदधीनस्तया विना ।  
तिष्ठामि न क्षणं शम्भो जीवनं परमं मम ॥

"O Śhambhu, giver of peace! Thou shouldst ever worship my transcendent Energy, the Giver of Delight, so deserving of worship. Rāmā is dependent upon her. Without her I could not for an instant remain in existence, she is my transcendent life".

Hearing this, the Lord of Sleep worshipped this All-Powerful Goddess, who showed kindness to him and appeared. Seeing her marvellous form, he praised her with intense devotion.

वन्दे विदेहतनयापदपुण्डरीकं,  
केशोरसौरभसमाहृतयोगिचित्तम् ।  
हन्तुं त्रितापमनिशं मुनिहंससेव्यम्,  
सन्मानसालिपरिपीतपरागपुञ्जम् ॥



"I bow to the lotus feet of the daughter of Videhā, whose youthfulness and fragrance attract the minds of yogis. Incessantly destroying the three kinds of burning pain, ever attended upon by the sages, who are the swans of knowledge, she is the store of pollen from which the bee of true intellect ever drinks".

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE SPOKEN WORD

The All-Powerful Goddess is also that Energy by which articulate sounds convey ideas.

There are four stages in the manifestation of the word, which are called the four stages of the voice :

The place, the means, the attempt, the self-radiant light, wherein is no differentiation into letters, is the 'voice beyond', *parā vāk* ; the mental energy first evolved, like a shoot springing from an invisible seed, is the 'perceptible voice', *paśhyantī* ; the sound conveying a definite thought is the 'intermediary voice', *madhyamā* ; and the manifest articulate sound in the form of letters, etc., is the 'manifest voice', *vaikhari*.

वैखरी शब्दनिष्पत्तिर्मध्यमा स्मृतिगोचरा ।

द्योतिकार्यस्य पश्यन्ती सूक्ष्मा ब्रह्मैव केवलम् ॥

"*Vaikhari* manifests the word. *Madhyamā* is seen through memory. *Paśhyantī* enlightens the meaning. The subtle voice is the Principle alone."

The Goddess ever dwells resplendent in the three pitches of the spoken sound. She dwells in all syllables, short, long or extra long, and even in the syllable of obeisance A U M itself, as the indestructible shape of the letters. She is established in A U M as she is in the gross, subtle and causal bodies<sup>1</sup> of beings which the three letters symbolize. She dwells, too, in a final unmanifest half-syllable which represents the support of both name and thing named.

1. *Viśhvā, Taijas, Prajñā.*



अकारश्च तथोकारो मकारश्चाक्षरत्रयम् ।  
 एता एव त्रयोमात्रा सत्त्वरजसतामसाः ॥  
 निर्गुणा योगिन्याऽन्या चार्थमात्रात्र संस्थिता ॥

"The letter A, the letter U and the letter M, are the three letters. And these three letters are the three tendencies, the ascending, the expanding and the descending. In addition there is also a half-letter representing the Unqualified, and perceived only by the Reintegrated, the Yogis." (Dattātreya Samhitā).

The first letter is the manifest, the second the unmanifest, the third is the power of Consciousness, the half-letter is the supreme unmanifest stage. This half-letter represents the basis of all, and this basis is not straight (कूटस्थ), i. e., is not within reach of mind and word.

In the Tripurā Tāpanīyā and the Sundarī Tāpanīyā, as well as in other Upaniṣhads, the voice-seed 'Hrim' found in the fourth hemistich of the Gāyatrī sacred utterance is said also to represent the Unqualified Principle, the Brahman.

The voice-seed 'Aen' represents the shape of Consciousness, Sarasvatī, Goddess of Knowledge. It is through knowing (jñānā) that one becomes freed from un-knowing. Reflected upon the mental movement (वृत्ति) which represents the shape of the Supreme Principle and is born from the Arch-utterance, this All-Powerful Goddess removes Ignorance.

The voice-seed 'Hrim', seed of Illusion, also represents the Arch-Divinity of Fortune, Mahā Lakṣmī, shape of Existence. She is the basis from which develops the illusory ether and other elements which form the manifest Universe. She is perpetually liberated; that which is not bound by the triple aspect of time is said to be eternal (nityā).

The voice-seed of desire 'klim' represents the Arch-power of Time, Mahā Kālī who is transcendent Bliss.

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE POWER OF ILLUSION (MĀYĀ)

In the Śhrīmad Bhāgavatā, 'Illusion (Māyā)' is defined as that state in which things appear where nothing is, and nothing appears where



something is, for example, the world of a dream, the silver of mother of pearl, the rope mistaken for a serpent.

ऋतेऽर्थं यत्प्रतीयेत न प्रतीयेत चात्मनि ।

तद्विद्यादात्मनो मायां यथा भासो यथा तमः ।

"Truth is where reality appears, that which does not appear of itself is illusion of itself. The one is like light the other like darkness."

It has been maintained that "the sacred texts which speak of the All-Powerful Goddess as the Power of Illusion (Māyā) contradict those which describe her as the Unqualified Principle."

This is however to take only a superficial view. The Vedāntā, the metaphysical End of Wisdom, sometimes speaks of Illusion as 'error' (मिथ्या). Now, error is of necessity based on some reality for no illusory thing can exist without a supporting entity and the reality of the supporting entity always remains pervading the illusion. Hence, in worshipping the All-Powerful Goddess, the illusion, one is worshipping the Principle, the Brahman, intrinsic Reality (sattā).

नाहं सुमुखि मायाया उपास्यत्वं ब्रुवे क्वचित् ।

मायाधिष्ठानचैतन्यमुपास्यत्वेन कीर्तितम् ॥

मायाशक्त्यादिशब्दश्च विशिष्टस्यैवलक्षकाः ।

तस्मान्मायादिशब्दैस्तद् ब्रह्मैवोपास्यमुच्यते ॥

"O Lovely faced ! I never said that Illusion was to be worshipped. It is the conscious support of Illusion which is known to deserve worship. Illusion, Energy, and other like words, point to a particularized state. Hence it is the Principle, the Brahman, whose worship is aimed at through such words as Illusion."

Illusion, Māyā, exists only through its relation with this All-supporting principle, the Brahman, and in describing the shape of Illusion of the All-Powerful Goddess, it is always the Principial shape that is described, and her worship should be understood to be the worship of the Principle of all.

The sacred utterances which envisage Illusion as 'error', differentiate it, however, from 'pure Illusion', because, in the Principle, there is no room for error.

The Brahman, which is the real object of all worship, forms the



substance of the power of Illusion and remains ever interwoven with her, even in the state of liberation. This is why the form of the object of worship need not be abandoned even by the liberated.

Being pervaded by the Principal Inner Ruler ( अन्तर्यामि ब्राह्मण ) all things, from the Earth to Illusion, are spoken of as divinities, since they always remain linked with the Universal Consciousness.

In the Eternal Wisdom, the Vedā, it is therefore said सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म "All this ( Universe ) is but the Brahman."

In other words, all such expressions as Illusion, Energy, Digit ( Kalā ), etc., which appear in the sacred utterances referring to the All-Powerful Goddess, should all be understood to refer indirectly to the Principle, particularized by Illusion, Energy, etc. Hence, when we speak of the All-Powerful Goddess, this always implies the Brahman qualified by his power of Illusion.

This same Power of Illusion envisaged as the power of Viṣṇu, the All Pervader, is the seed of all existence.

त्वं वैष्णवीशक्तिरनन्तवीर्या विश्वस्यबीजं परमासि माया

"Thou art the Energy of the Pervader ( Vaiṣṇavī-Śhakti ) of boundless procreative powers, thou art the seed of the Universe, the Supreme Power of Illusion."

These and similar sayings make it clear that the All-Powerful Goddess has Power of Illusion for her nature.

The way of her worship is explained in different scriptures.

#### WHY THE DIVINE POWER OF ILLUSION SHOULD BE WORSHIPPED

Some say that, according to the Vedāntā, this Divine Power Māyā is but delusion; to follow her cannot lead to Liberation, and the worship therefore of the All-Powerful Goddess is not worthy of respect.

But in the Tāpanīyā Upaniṣhad it is said :

माया वा एषा नारसिंही सर्वमिदं सृजति, सर्वमिदं रक्षति, सर्वमिदं संहति,  
तस्मान्मायामेतां शक्तिं विद्याद्य पतां मायां शक्तिं वेद, स मृत्युं जयति,  
स पाप्मानं तरति, सोऽमृतत्वं गच्छति, महतीं श्रियमश्नुते ।



"This Man-lion's Power of Illusion ( Nārasimhi Māyā ) gives birth to the whole manifest universe. It protects all, and also destroys all. A man should aim to know this Power of Illusion.

He who knows it conquers Death, crosses beyond sin, reaches immortality, and attains Great Fortune ( Mahatī Śhrī )."

The Principal quiddity ( Brahmā-tattvā ) is everywhere equally pervasive. The teachers therefore speak of a Supreme Causality found in everything. For those who seek pleasure or those who seek Liberation the worship of the All-Powerful Goddess is supremely essential. She is Principal Sapience ( Brahmā-Vidyā ); she is the Mother of the Universe. By her the whole world is pervaded..

यो न पूजयते नित्यं चण्डिकां भक्तवत्सलाम् ।

भस्मीकृत्वास्य पुण्यानि निदं हेतमपीश्वरी ॥

"Who does not ever worship the fearful Goddess devoted to her devotees, his merits the Goddess reduces to ashes and burns him too."

The Worship of the All-Powerful Goddess, representing the Unqualified Principle, the Brahman, is advocated in the Kālī and Tārā Upaniṣhads.

अतः संसारनाशाय साक्षिणीमात्मरूपिणी—

माराधयेत् परां शक्तिं प्रपञ्चोल्लासवर्जिताम् ।

( Sūtā-Samhitā )

"To be freed from the world one should worship the Witness of All, the Transcendent Energy whose shape is the Self and in whom exist neither the manifested world nor its pleasures."

निर्गुणा सगुणा चेति द्विधा प्रोक्ता मनीषिभिः ।

सगुणा रागिभिः सेव्या निर्गुणा तु निरागिभिः ॥

( Devī Bhāgavatā )

"She is said by the learned to be of two kinds, Unqualified and qualified, those bound by attachment should worship her qualified form and those without attachment her Unqualified form."

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AND CREATION

When, through their being enjoyed, the fruits of action have become ripe and begin to wither, the universe dissolves and all manifestation



is merged in the Womb of Māyā, the Divine Power of Illusion. Then Māyā herself dissolves into the qualitless Principle, her support.

अव्यक्तं पुरुषे ब्रह्मन् निगुणे सम्प्रलीयते ।

"The Unmanifest ( Avyaktā ) dissolves into the qualitless Principial Person."

These words of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa make it clear that the traditional scripture considers that even the Unmanifest ( Avyaktā ) dissolves into the Principle, the Brahman. The 'Unmanifest', is but a synonym of Māyā. When the time comes for all beings to enjoy the fruits of their actions, then, in the All-Powerful Goddess, arises the 'desire to create' ( सिसृक्षा ) or a 'particularized desire to act' ( विचिकीर्षा ). This 'particularized desire to act' is the non-existence previous to existence ( प्रागभाव ). It is the result of destruction and is due to the maturing of actions. In the state of equilibrium of the three fundamental qualities there is no process such as maturing of actions, and it is very difficult to see why this state of equilibrium should ever be broken. We know however that by the strength of a decision to wake at a certain time, taken before going to sleep, we can wake at that given time, the decision to wake having remained outside the realm of the state of sleep; so, similarly, by the strength of the Divine resolve taken before the Universe is dissolved, the state of equilibrium comes to an end at a given time and the previous actions bear fruit and the state of non-existence previous to existence comes to an end. Then the fruits of actions having ripened the tendency called 'Creative Illusion' ( Māyā Vṛitti ) arises. The Principle, the Brahman, when qualified by this Power of Illusion arising from matured actions, is called 'Bindu', 'the point limit' [ whence manifestation arises ]. Being indivisible this point-limit is called Avyaktā the Unmanifest. It is a state of Māyā, and is therefore also spoken of as Māyā, and, since it has not, like the 'Arch-Principle of existence' ( Mahat ), issued from another principle, it is considered, although born from a special state of Māyā to be Māyā itself.

Causation cannot be attributed to the Brahman alone. We have to realize that the possibility of causation pertains to the Brahman qualified by the Power of Illusion in the subtle state. This Unmanifest ( Avyaktā ) state can be understood by comparing it with the state of



germinating potentiality ( उच्छ्रुनावस्था ) intermediary between the seed and the sprout, when the seed begins to develop through contact with earth, warmth and moisture. The equality of the three qualities is the 'seed' stage, pure Māyā. When the seed sprouts we have the 'resultant stage' ( Kāryā-avasthā ). Pure volition ( Īkṣhaṇā ) and "I-notion" ( Aham-kārā ), are respectively the Arch-principle of existence ( Mahat-tattvā ) and the Principle of individual existence ( Aham-tattvā ). In the individual world we may take the state of sleep as the 'seed' state. The inclination to awaken is the Unmanifest ( Avyaktā ) state. The Conscious deprived of its analytical faculty is the Arch-Principle of existence ( Mahat-tattvā ). From the Arch Principle of Existence and the Principle of Individual existence the multiplicity of the gross resulting world arises. When the Unmanifest state ( Avyaktā ) is inwardly directed this is known as the fourth stage ( Turiyā ). When it is outwardly directed it is known as the 'causal body' ( kāraṇa deha ). From the Unmanifest outwardly directed arise subtle and gross bodies, the whole of the spatial universe inclusive. The principle which rules the gross body whether individual or universal as well as the senses of perception the inner faculties is known as the Creator Brahmā united with the Lady of the Lake ( Sarasvatī ). The distinctive body ( Liṅga deha ) ( or transmigrating body ) is ruled by the Pervader Viṣṇu with ( his consort ) the Divinity of Fortune ( Lakṣmī ). The Principle ruling over the causal body is the Lord of Tears Rudrā ( = Śhivā ) with his consort the Fair Lady Gaurī ( = Pārvatī ). The entities personifying the as yet individualized fourth stage are the Lady of the spheres ( Bhuvaneśhvari ) and the Arch Divinity of Fortune ( Mahā-Lakṣmī ).

#### THE DUALISM OF NATURE AND PERSON

In the Devī-ātharvā-śhīrṣhā, the Goddess speaks of herself as:

अहं ब्रह्मस्वरूपिणी मत्तः प्रकृतिपुरुषात्मकं जगत् शून्यञ्चाशून्यञ्च

"I am the intrinsic shape of the Principle. From me arises the world which is Nature and Person, and the void and the non-void."

Thus, those who say that the Goddess is only the stage of Nature



are wrong. To show that she is the Self of all she describes herself as Joy and non-Joy, knowing and unknowing, Principle and non-Principle. The Unborn Goddess said : I am the whole moving universe अहमखिलं जगत्. She is Eternal Wisdom, Sapience and non-Sapience, the unborn and the not-unborn.

शङ्करः पुरुषाः सर्वे स्त्रियः सर्वा महेश्वरी  
विषयी भगवानीशो विषयः परमेश्वरी ॥  
मानः स एव विश्वात्मा मन्तव्यस्तु महेश्वरी ।  
आकाशः शङ्करो देवः पृथिवी शङ्करप्रिया ॥

"All that is male is the giver of Happiness, all that is female is the Arch-Goddess. Thought is the Divine Lord, the perceived the Divine Lady. Thought is the Self of the world, the object of thought is the Arch-Goddess. Ether is the giver of Happiness, the Earth is his beloved."

This dual principle manifests itself in many ways as ocean and shore, tree and creeper, word and meaning, substance and energy, male and female, ritual and object of worship, action and resulting quality, manifested and manifesting, planning and result, understood and understanding, Eternal Law and conforming behaviour, satisfaction and its feeling, desire and its enjoyment, light and lamp, night and day, flag and staff, thirst and greed, desire and attachment. By the word Śhakti (Energy) many merely understand Power of Illusion (Māyā) or Ignorance (Avidyā), but the word Śhakti also refers to the Energy of Delight (Āhladini Śhakti), which is the intrinsic nature of the All-Powerful, and to Transcendent Nature whence living beings arise. Just as sweetness is the intrinsic nature of sugar, raisins or honey, so Energy is the intrinsic Nature of the All Powerful.

#### NATURE (PRAKRITI) AND HER THREE QUALITIES

In the Glorious (Virāt), totality of the gross Universe, in the Embryo of Splendour (Hiraṇyagarbhā) totality of all Supersensible states, in the Unmanifest (Avyākṛitā) the total causal state, which states are also spoken of as the Creator (Brahmā), the Pervader



(Viṣṇu) and the Lord of Tears (Rudrā=Śhivā) one of the three basic tendencies (guṇās) respectively predominates. The Power of Illusion represents the state of equilibrium of these three basic tendencies, dependent only on the Pure Unqualified Principle, the Brahman. In the worship of the All-Powerful Goddess, it is the Fourth stage Principle (Turiyā Brahman) particularized by Creative Illusion which is aimed at; to show this the All-Powerful Goddess is called by such names as Illusion (Māyā), Nature (Prakṛiti), etc.

तमो वा इदमेकमग्र आसीत् तत्परे स्यात्परेणेति तं विषमत्वं प्रयात्येतद्वै रजः  
तद्रजः खल्वीरितं विषमत्वं प्रयात्येतद्वै सत्त्वम् ।

"First there was only darkness, the descending tendency. Then, instigated by the Supreme Principle it became unbalanced and the expanding tendency appeared. And in turn this expanding tendency became unbalanced and the ascending tendency appeared."

(Maitrāyaṇī Śhruti)

Nature (Prakṛiti) which represents the state of equilibrium of these three fundamental tendencies dwells in the Supreme Principle, the Parā-Brahman. These tendencies are her constituent parts. The Principle, the Brahman, when particularized by this or that tendency is but a part of Itself. Only when characterized (उपलक्षित) by Root Nature (Mūlā-Prakṛiti) as a whole, does the Principle, the Brahman, represent the fourth transcendent impartible stage.

Although, according to sayings in the Primordial Revelation (Śhruti) सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म "All this Universe is but the Brahman", for example—, the Principle, the Brahman, which is pure Consciousness, is said to be everything, yet to conform with the mental inclinations of devotees, all kinds of shapes are named. The teachings relate to the impure, pure, purer and purest attributes of the Brahman. According to the relative purity of the mirroring surface, there is a relative improvement in the reflection, similarly, according to the relative purity of the attributes, there is a relative betterment in the manifestation (प्राकट्य) of the Principle. It is to show this that the Scriptures describe the ever greater and greater splendours of (divine) magnificence (विभूति). In comparison with any one tendency or quality the stage of equilibrium of all the tendencies or qualities is higher, and the worship of



the All-Powerful Goddess is the highest. Moreover, the first relation of the Principle, the Brahman is with the Creative Power of Illusion. His relation with qualities exists only through Māyā. Therefore the relation of the Principle with the state of equilibrium of the qualities, is one of non-differentiation.

In the Compleitive Scriptures, the Purāṇās the word 'Nature' (Prakṛiti) is said to mean that which in Creation is transcendent (Paramā).

प्रकृष्टवाचकः प्रश्च कृतिश्च सृष्टिवाचकः ।

सृष्टौ या परमा देवी प्रकृतिः सा प्रकीर्तिता ॥

"The syllable 'Pra' means higher (Prakṛiṣṭā); 'kṛiti' (the deed) stands for the Creation (Sṛiṣṭi). Hence, She, who in Creation is transcendent, is the Goddess celebrated as Nature (Prakṛiti)."

#### THE UNBORN AJĀ

मायान्तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनन्तु महेश्वरम्

"Illusion is the Nature (Prakṛiti) (of the spatial universe, Viśhvā); and the [ Principle, the Brahman, ] particularized by Power of Illusion, is Arch-Divinity."

Elsewhere this Power of Illusion is spoken of as the Unborn or the she-goat, Ajā.

अजामेकां लोहितशुक्लकृष्णां बह्वीः प्रजाः सृजमानां स्वरूपाः ।

अजोहो को ज्ञप्समाणोऽनुशेते जहात्येनां भुक्तभोगामजोऽन्यः ॥

"One single she-goat (Ajā) red, white and black gives birth to many small ones which look just like her. One he-goat enjoying pleasure at her side follows her; the others having enjoyed her abandon her".

Like the she-goat, Nature, of triple quality, gives birth to the world. First begotten is the Arch-Principle, Mahat, the Universal Intellect. In it too are found the three fundamental qualities. Its black quality is the descending tendency (Tamo guṇā) whose nature is to veil. Its white quality is the ascending tendency (Sattvā guṇā) whose nature is to illumine. Its red quality is the expanding tendency



(Rajo guṇā) whose nature is to please. Some of the goats, after enjoying the spotted she-goat, whose children are likewise spotted, still follow her, while others, having enjoyed her, abandon her. So also some living beings after enjoying Nature follow her who, spotted with her three qualities, procreates the world, while others, having finished enjoying her, abandon her. This Un-born, this she-goat Ajā is the Power of Illusion.

To perform any action, Divinity (Īśhvarā) must act through her who is his Nature (Prakṛiti).

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य संभवाम्यात्ममायया

"Taking the help of her who is my own Nature I take birth through my Power of Illusion." (Bhag. Gītā 9, 8)

Thus Divinity incarnates itself with the help of Nature (Prakṛiti) and Nature, under the control of Divinity (Īśhvarā), manifests the perceptible world.

मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम्

"Under my control Nature gives birth to the world of moving and unmoving things." (id. 9, 10).

मम योनिर्महद् ब्रह्म तस्मिन्नामं दधाम्यहम् ।

संभवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥

"O Scion of Bharata! Nature<sup>1</sup> is a womb for me: therein I set the germ; thence spring forth all born beings."

सर्वं योनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः सम्भवन्ति याः ।

तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ॥

(id. 14, 3)

"O Son of Kuntī! the beings born in all species are [divine] images. Nature is the womb and I am the father that gives the seed." (id. 14, 4).

To pass beyond Nature and her three qualities is most difficult. Only by witnessing the supporting principle, the Brahman, can Nature be transgressed.

1. Nature (Prakṛiti) is the 'Principle' or cause (Brahmā) of Universal Intellect (Mahat).



दैवी ह्यैषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया

"My Power of Illusion is divine and of great virtue. It is hard to pass beyond it."

भूतप्रकृतिमोक्षश्च ये विदुर्यान्ति ते परम्

"Only those who know the nature of existence and of liberation can pass beyond them."

#### KNOWING AND UNKNOWNING

Māyā, the Divine Power of Illusion, is sometimes spoken of as Ignorance (Avidyā) or as Un-knowing (Ajñānā). Unknowing in this connotation is not mere absence of knowledge, but is beyond Knowledge and that unspeakable state which is pure 'Being'. Only from such transcendent Un-knowing can arise the veiling which is the first cause, अज्ञानेनावृतं ज्ञानम् and "Knowledge be veiled by Un-knowing."

In this utterance Knowledge is the intrinsic form of the Principle, the Brahman veiled by Un-knowing. This is only possible if Un-knowing be the very form of existence itself, because the non-existent cannot veil. Like Un-knowing, the power of Illusion, Māyā, is also compared with a veil.

Although Self-illuminated,

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः

"None can see me who am surrounded by the reintegrant power of Illusion."

'Me', here, means the "I", the very first notion of individual existence (asmat), which is not distinct from the Supreme Principle the Parā-Brahman.

अहमज्ञः "I am the Unknown."

मामहं न जानामि "I do not know myself."

त्वामहं न जानामि "I do not know you."

It is in this way that the main Un-knowing can be experienced. If Un-knowing were mere absence of knowing, such experience could not take place, for

ज्ञानतया अज्ञानतया वा सर्वं वस्तु साक्षिभास्यम्



"In the form of knowing or of un-knowing, all things are illumined by the Witness."

Thus, whether we say घटो ज्ञातः "The pitcher is known", or whether we say घटो न ज्ञायते "The pitcher is unknown", the pitcher, in one case the object form of knowing, in the other of un-knowing, is in either case illumined by the Witness.

#### THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE (AVIDYĀ)

"Ignorance is the Perishable and Sapience the Immortal. He who rules over Sapience and Ignorance is other."

चतुष्कपर्दा युवतिः सुपेशा घृतप्रतीका वयुर्नानि वस्ते ।

तस्यां सुपर्णा वृषणा निषेदतुर्यत्र देवा दधिरे भागधेयम् ॥

"Young, well-shapen, with her four plaited locks, and the golden glow of melted butter, she conceals knowledge. Near-by, where the Gods receive their share, two mighty birds are seated." (Rig Veda X, 114, 3).

This hermetic utterance describes the ignorance aspect of the All-Powerful Goddess, who as power of Illusion, appears under four shapes : gross, subtle, causal and undifferentiated (samādhi). Divine and mortal beings, here compared to the two birds, are both connected with her.

[As the Veiling Power, the Goddess is likened to Primordial ] Darkness, the descending tendency, covering the inner Reality ( tattvā ).

तम आसीत्तमसा गूढमग्रेऽप्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वमा इदम् ।

"Erstwhile, everywhere upon these formless waters, was Darkness deeper than darkness".

आसीदिदं तमोभूतमप्रज्ञातमलक्षणम् ।

अप्रतर्क्यमनिदे श्यं प्रसुप्तमिव सर्वतः ॥

"This essence of Darkness was ; unknowable, without characteristics, unspeakable, indefinable, it spread everywhere as if asleep."

#### THE BIRTH OF THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS

The power of consciousness is an emanation from the Supreme Self. The Divine birth of the All-Powerful Goddess expresses this. [ Her



appearances within the manifest world are too, spoken of as her births. ]

नित्यैव सा जगन्मूर्तिस्तया सर्वं मिदं ततम् ।  
 तथापि तत्समुत्पत्तिवद्बुधा श्रूयतां मम ॥  
 देवानां कार्यसिद्धयर्थमाविर्भवति सा यदा ।  
 उत्पन्नेति तदा लोके सा नित्याप्यभिधीयते ॥

"She, the embodiment of the Universe, is eternal, by her all is pervaded. Yet I heard many tales of her rise. When she manifests herself to accomplish the work of the Gods, she, although eternal, is said by the world to have arisen".

#### THE AVATARS OF THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS

Veiling herself with her own power of Illusion (Māyā Śhakti) she appears as the 'Belle of the three cities' (Tripurā sundarī), the 'Lady of the Spheres' (Bhuvaneśhvari), and also as the 'Pervader' (Viśhṇu), the 'Lord of Sleep' (Śhivā), the 'Dark Prince' (Kṛishṇā), 'Prince-Charming' (Rāmā), the 'Lord of the Numbered' (Gaṇāpati), the 'sun' (Sūryā) and under many another shape.

It is the Consciousness, witness of all, dwelling inside the three Cities formed by the gross, subtle and causal body, which is the 'Belle of the Three Cities'. When this inner Essence (tattvā) becomes particularised (विशिष्ट) by the power of Illusion, 'Descents' (Avatārās) take place, like Rāmā the Charming and the Dark Śhri Kṛishṇa. The Arch-Divinity of Fortune (Mahā Lakṣhmi), the Arch-Lady of the Lake (Mahā Sarasvatī), The Arch-Fair Lady (Mahā Gaurī), indeed all such Divine aspects, are also 'Descents' of this eternal All-Powerful Goddess.

The All-Powerful Goddess shines forth in all shapes. She, the mother, stands in the twilight rituals (sandhyā), in the Solar hymns (sāvitrī); as root-nature, she is the Mother of the world; at the time of creation, she creates, at the time of preservation she preserves and in the end she destroys. She is Arch-Sapience (Mahā-vidyā), that is, she is the Principial Sapience (Brahmā-vidyā) manifested in 'Thou art



that' (tat-tvam-asi) and other arch-utterances. She is Illusion in the shape of body, of self, of intellect. She is the faculty of memory (medhā) on which all meaning depends. She is arch-tradition (Mahā-smṛiti). Through her alone can the countless past aeons be remembered and creation take place in accordance with them. She is arch-delusion (mahā-mohā) which is the desire for vulgar pleasures. She is too, the Arch-Goddess, the Energy of Indrā, Lord of the Angels, and of other deities. She is the power of the Golden-eyed Hiranyakṣhā and of the other Titans (asurās). She is Root-Nature of which the three fundamental qualities (guṇā's) are the display. She is the Night of Time (kāla rātri), the Night of Death (maraṇā rātri), the Night of the Lord of Sleep (Śhivā rātri). She is the arch-Night (mahā rātri), the Night of Destruction (Pralayā rātri). Incarnated on the eighth day of the moon when Kṛṣṇā was born, the All-Powerful Goddess beguiling Kāṁsā and his assistants, helped to bring the child Kṛṣṇā to the house of the cowherd Nandā. She is Fortune (Śhri), she is Divinity (Īshvarā), she is Modesty (lajjā), and she is Intellect (buddhi).

#### THE ICON OF THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS

यस्याः स्वरूपं ब्रह्मादयो न जानन्ति तस्मादुच्यते अज्ञेया यस्या अन्तो न लभ्यते  
तस्मादुच्यते अनन्ता.....एकैव सर्वं त्र विद्यते तस्मादुच्यते ।

"She whose shape even the Creator and the other Gods cannot know, is called the Unknowable. She whose end cannot be found is called the Endless. She who is everywhere present is called the One."

ज्ञानानां चिन्मयातीता शून्यानां शून्यरूपिणी ।  
यस्याः परतरं नास्ति सैषा दुर्गा प्रकीर्तिता ॥  
यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।

"Of all knowledge she is transcendent Consciousness, of all voids the Void. She, beyond whom there is no beyond, is sung as Durgā, the Goddess-beyond-Reach", "whence words and mind fall back, having no hold."



The root of the whole manifest Universe ( *prapañchā* ) and of the divine 'descents' ( *avatārās* ) is in the First Goddess ( *Prathamā* ) the Arch-divinity of Fortune *Mahā Lakṣmī*. She represents the equilibrium of the three fundamental qualities and is the feminine aspect of Supreme Divinity. She has a dual shape, being either definable or indefinable ( *alakṣhyā* ).

In every thing five aspects are found, three which pertain to the Principle, the Brahman, and two which pertain to Illusion *Māyā*; the three pertaining to the Principle are Existence ( *asti* ), Radiance ( *bhāti* ) and Lovability ( *priyā* ), and the two pertaining to Illusion are Name ( *nāmā* ) and Shape ( *rūpā* ).

It is, verily, for the sake of her devotees, that the qualitless, true, eternal, All-Powerful Goddess, who is the shape of all that exists, appears in qualified form.

Of her innumerable shapes, the following nine are also predominant:

(1) The Daughter of the Mountain ( *Śhailā putrī* ), (2) the Chaste ( *Brahmachārīnī* ), (3) the Moon-bell ( *Chandrā ghaṇṭā* ), (4) the Spell ( *Kuṣhmāṇḍā* ), (5) the Mother of the Lord of War ( *Skandā Mātā* ), (6) Daughter of *Kātyāyanā* ( *Kātyāyanī* ), (7) the Night of Death ( *Kālā rātrī* ), (8) the Arch-Fair Lady ( *Mahā Gaurī* ), (9) the Giver of Attainment ( *Siddhidā* ).

कार्यार्थे सगुणा त्वं च वस्तुतो निर्गुणा स्वयम् ।  
परब्रह्मस्वरूपा त्वं सत्या नित्या सनातनी ॥  
सर्वस्वरूपा सर्वेशी सर्वाधारा परापरा ।  
सर्वबीजस्वरूपा च सर्वमूला निराश्रया ॥  
सर्वज्ञा सर्वतोभद्रा सर्वमङ्गलमङ्गला ॥

"For the sake of action thou art qualified although thyself unqualified. Thou art the intrinsic form of the transcendent principle ( *Parā Brahman* ), true, eternal, ancient. Thou art the shape of all things, the Ruler of all, the support of all, beyond the beyond, Thou art intrinsic shape of all seed, the root of all, resting on none, all-knowing, ever-auspicious, the felicity of all felicities."



### The Descending Tendency

The Primordial Arch-Goddess, the Arch-Divinity of Fortune, Mahā-Lakṣhmī, seeing the whole Universe devoid of support, entered the sole descending tendency and took upon herself a new and wonderful shape.

Many were the names and shapes and corresponding works assigned to the Arch-Divinity of Fortune when she entered the descending tendency ; for she is always impersonating the conditionings of time. Thus, within the unstable state of unmanifest Nature, she took amongst others, the shape of the Arch-power of Time, Mahā Kālī, and, as such, was both the measure of the existence of Brahmā and the other Gods and their destroyer. When she appeared, this Arch-power of Time asked of the Root-Goddess, the Arch-divinity of Fortune: "Pray tell me my name and work." But Mahā Kālī is not really distinct from Mahā Lakṣhmī the Root-Goddess, although there is a difference in their representation. Mahā Kālī is depicted as black like collyrium, with splendid teeth and lovely face, long eyes and a slender waist. She holds a sword, a pitcher, a skull and a shield, and wears a garland of gems and skulls, or sometimes of skulls only.

Since she could delude the Creator Brahmā and other Gods, the Arch-divinity of Fortune, Mahā Lakṣhmī, was also named Arch-Illusion, Mahā Māyā ; always ready to devour all things, she was named Hunger, Kṣhudhā ; ever desirous of drinking in all knowledge and of gaining the devotion of devotees, she was Thirst, Tṛṣṇā ; being of great prowess she was the single-handed Hero Ekā Virā.

### The Ascending Tendency

When, however, the Arch-divinity of Fortune entered the infinitely pure ascending tendency, she took upon herself another lovely form, shining softly like the light of the moon. She appeared as a beautiful divine woman holding a rosary, an elephant-hook, a lute (vīṇā) and a book. Again names and corresponding works were given to her. She was Arch-Sapience (Mahā Vidyā), Arch-Word (Mahā Vāṇī), Eloquence (Bhārati), Voice (Vāk), the Lady of the Lake (Sarasvatī),



the lady of High lineage (Āryā), the Knower of the Principle (Brahmī), the cow of Abundance (Kāmā Dhenu), the Womb of the Seed (Bījā-garbhā), the Guardian of Wealth (Dhaneśhvarī).

### The Expanding Tendency

But, since the Arch-divinity of Fortune embodies the state of equilibrium of all the three fundamental qualities, she therefore also entered the expanding tendency. We then hear her described as red in colour, the colour of the expanding tendency. Having thus entered the expanding tendency, Mahā Lakṣhmī addressed Mahā Kālī, the Arch-Power of Time, and Mahā Sarasvatī, the Arch-Lady of the lake and said to them: "Each one of us has now to manifest as man and woman in the embrace of love (rūpā mithunā)."

Having spoken, the Arch-divinity of Fortune gloriously enthroned on the pure lotus of knowledge, became bi-form as man and woman. The names of the male form were Brahmā (the Vast), Dhātā (the Support), etc. while the female names were Śhrī (Fortune), Padmā or Kamalā (Lady of the Lotus), Lakṣhmī (Divinity of Fortune) and many others.

Arch-power of Time also became bi-form, of which the man had a blue throat, red arms, fair thighs and the moon as a diadem; the woman, beautiful, was white. The man's names were Rudrā (Lord of Tears), Śhaṅkarā (Giver of Happiness), Sthāṇu (Dry Tree Trunk), Kapardī (Matted-Haired), Tri-lochanā (Three-eyed); the woman's names were Trayī-Vidyā (Triple Sapience), Kāmā Dhenu (cow of Abundance), Bhāṣhā (Language), Akṣharā (the Lettered), Svarā (the Syllabled), etc.

Of the pair which sprang from the Lady of the Lake, the male names were Viṣṇu (the Pervader), Kṛṣṇā (the Dark Lord), Hṛṣhikā-īśhā (Lord of the Senses), Vāsudevā (Indwelling Divinity), Janārdanā (Tormentor of Men); the female names were Umā (Peace of the Night), Gaurī (Fair Lady), Satī (Faithful), Chāṇḍī (the Wrathful), Sundarī (the Beautiful), Subhagā (the Fortunate), Śhivā (the Lady of Sleep).

The Arch-divinity of Fortune gave the Creator Brahmā in marriage



to the Lady of the Lake Sarasvatī, the Lord of Tears Rudrā to the Fair Lady Gaurī, and In-dweller Vāsudevā to the Divinity of Fortune Lakṣhmī. Brahmā with Sarasvatī made the Universe, Rudrā with Gaurī destroyed it and Viṣṇu with Lakṣhmī maintained it.

In creation, motion and power to know are necessary. The motion of the expanding tendency and the Power of knowing of the ascending tendency can create. Therefore it is through Sarasvatī that Brahmā creates.

It is through the inertia of Tamas and the movement of Rajas that maintenance exists. Therefore with his spouse Lakṣhmī Viṣṇu protects. Destruction takes place through the light of the ascending tendency and the inertia of the descending tendency. Therefore, it is with his wife Gaurī that Śhivā destroys.

As Mahā Lakṣhmī :

The All-Powerful Goddess, who sprang forth from the body of all the Gods, has a thousand, indeed, countless arms, although adepts worship her image with but eighteen arms. Her face is white, made from light streaming from the Lord of sleep, Śhivā. Her arms made from Viṣṇu are a deep blue, her rounded breasts made of Somā, the sacrificial elixir, are pure white. Her waist is Indrā, the King of Heaven, and therefore, red. Her feet sprung from Brahmā are, therefore, also red, while her calves and thighs, sprung from Varuṇā, the Lord of Waters, are blue. She wears a gaily coloured lower garment, brilliant garlands and a veil. Starting from the lower left hand, she holds in her hands the following attributes : a rosary, lotus, arrow, sword, hatchet, club, discus, axe, trident, conch, bell, noose, spear, stick, hide, bow, chalice and water-pot. He who worship this Arch-divinity of Fortune, Mahā Lakṣhmī, becomes Lord of all the worlds.

As the Arch-power of Time, Mahā Kālī:

In this shape, the Arch-divinity of Fortune is the sleep of reintegration (yogā nidrā) of Viṣṇu. To awaken Viṣṇu, Brahmā praised her. She has ten faces, ten arms, ten feet and thirty-three great eyes. Terrifying to her enemies, to her devotees her shape is the very essence, basis of all.



As the Lady of the Lake, Sarasvatī :

In this shape, the Arch-divinity of Fortune is sometimes described as having eight arms bearing the attributes : arrow, mace, spear, discus, conch, bell, plough and bow. He who worships her thus acquires universal knowledge.

#### THE ALL-POWERFUL GODDESS AS THE TEN ARCH SAPIENCES ( MAHĀ VIDYĀS )

The Arch-Power of Time ( Mahā Kālī ) :

Mahā Kālī is connected with the time of destruction and is therefore black in colour. She stands upon a corpse because she stands upon the dead, powerless universe. The power which destroys enemies inspires fear. The laughter of the warrior who has killed his opponent makes him the more terrifying. The All-Powerful Goddess, having abased the pride of the powerless world, laughs too. That which is complete is symbolised by the square she has therefore four arms. Four arms are always used to represent totality. She knows no fear, those who shelter in her likewise know no fear, therefore the All-Powerful Goddess shows the hand-gesture of allaying fear. Worldly happiness lasts but an instant, transcendent happiness is the All-Powerful Goddess herself. She is the support of both the living and the dead universes, She alone can succour the dead. The garland of skulls round her neck bears witness to this. The Universe is the vesture of this All-Powerful Goddess, shape of the Principle, the Brahman. At the time of destruction all dissolves and the Goddess stands naked. Passing beyond the funeral pyre of all the worlds, all beings reach this Goddess made of the descending tendency ( tamas ), and who is said, therefore, to dwell in cremation grounds.

शवारूढां महाभीमां घोरदंष्ट्रां हसन्मुखीम् ।

चतुर्भुजां खड्गमुण्डवराभयकरां शिवाम् ॥

मुण्डमालाधरां देवीं ललज्जिह्वां दिगम्बराम् ।

एवं सञ्चिन्तयेत् कालीं श्मशानालयवासिनीम् ॥

"Standing on a corpse, fearful, with her terrible teeth and laughing mouth, she has four arms. Two of her hands hold a sword and a head,



the other two show the gestures of allaying fear and granting boons. She is the auspicious Divinity of Sleep. Wearing a garland of skulls the resplendent Goddess, her tongue lolling out, is clad only in space. Thus should the shape of Kālī, the Power of Time, who dwells on cremation grounds be meditated on."

The shape of this Arch-Power of Time Mahā Kālī is that Bliss beyond the beyond, which is the supremely transcendent Bliss-shape of the Principle the Brahman.

The Star ( Tārā ) :

In the Embryo of Splendour ( Hiranyā-garbhā ), the universal supersensible world, there exists light. In the Night of Time, which is the state of universal dissolution, this light appears, like a star, giving both knowledge of the supersensible world and the means to this knowledge. This Energy, or light, of the Embryo of Splendour is called Tārā.

Because of hunger, the Embryo of Splendour was at first terrible, but having found his food he was pacified. The Energy of this terrifying aspect of the Embryo of Splendour is the Star Tārā. When pressed by hunger, the Embryo of Splendour becomes the destroyer, and his Energy, therefore, is also destructive.

प्रत्यालोढपदार्पितां त्रिशवधुद्वोराट्टहासा परा  
खड्गे न्दीवरकर्तृ खर्परभुजा हुङ्कारवीजोद्भवा ।  
खर्वानीलविशालपिङ्गलजटाजूटकनागैर्युता,  
जाऽयं न्यस्य कपालके त्रिजगतां हन्त्युग्रतारा स्वयम् ॥

"Standing firmly with her left foot forward resting on a corpse, she laughs aloud, transcendent, her hands holding a sword, a blue lotus, a dagger and a begging-bowl. She raises her war-cry: Houn! Her matted yellow hair is bound with great poisonous blue snakes. Thus the terrifying Tārā beats the three worlds on the head."

Her four arms, too, are entwined with snakes, suggestive of destruction, while the serpents in her matted hair show how frightful are her poisonous emanations. When she is depicted as holding a head and a chalice, this suggests that in her fearful mood she drinks the sap of the world.



Jainās and Buddhists worship this Goddess, but it is the Buddhists mainly who know the secret of her worship.

मदीयाराधनाचारं बौद्धरूपी जनार्दन ।

एक एव विज्ञानाति नान्यः कश्चन तत्त्वतः ॥

"The proper way of my worship is the Buddhist way. O Janārdanā. Tormentor of men! That way one man alone knows, none other knows it."

( Lalitā Upakhyānā )

It is chiefly under the guise of Sutārā, the Good Star, that she is worshipped by the Jainas.

Representing the Imperishable ( अक्षोभ्य ) she is also called the 'Visible Lord', Avalokitā-Īśhvarā.

क्षोभादिरहितं यस्मात् पोतं हालाहलं विषम् ।

अतएव महेशानि अक्षोभ्यः परिकीर्तितः ॥

तेन सार्धं महामाया तारिणी रमते सदा ॥

"O great Goddess ! Without perishing, Śhivā, the Lord of Sleep, drank the Halāhalā poison hence is he known as the Imperishable. The Arch-power of Illusion, who plays ever lustfully with him, is the Star Tārā."

The Girl of Sixteen ( Śhodaśhī ) :

The peaceful aspect of the Embryo of Splendour, subtle body of the Universe and identified with the Solar Principle, is called Śhivā, the Lord of Sleep. His visible icon has five faces and in him the sixteen digits of total being are fully developed. He is therefore also called 'the lad of Sixteen' and the Energy of this five-faced One is called the 'Girl of Sixteen,' Śhodaśhī, who

बालार्कमण्डलाभासां चतुर्बाहुं त्रिलोचनाम् ।

पाशाङ्कुशशरांश्चापं धारयन्तीं शिवां भजे ॥

( Śhodaśhī tantra )

"shines like the orb of an infant sun, with four arms and three eyes, holding a noose, an elephant-hook, an arrow and a bow. I salute thee, auspicious Goddess."



### The Lady of the Spheres ( Bhuvaneśhvari ):

The Support of the universe conceived as a developing entity is the three-mothered ( Tri-ambakā ). His Energy is the 'Lady of the Spheres'.

उद्यद्दिनद्युतिमिन्दुकिरीटां तुङ्गकुचां नयनद्वययुक्ताम् ।  
स्मेरमुखीं वरदाङ्कुशपाशां भीतिकरां प्रमजे भुवनेशीम् ॥

"Shining like the risen day, with the moon as thy diadem, high breasted and two eyed, smiling, thy hands granting boons, allaying fear, and holding an elephant hook and a noose, I salute thee, Lady of the spheres."

With the ambrosia made of Lunar essence, the sacrificial offering Somā, she quenches the thirst of the world. This is why the All-Powerful Goddess has placed the moon on her diadem. She takes care of the three worlds and feeds them, so one of her emblems is the gesture of granting boons ( Varā mudrā ). The sign of her kindness is her smile. The emblems of her ruling powers are the elephant driving-hook and the noose.

The Lady of the Spheres is also represented with other attributes. On the lower of her right hands she then holds a chalice, in the upper a mace, in the upper left a shield, in the lower the bilvā fruit ( śhrī phalā ) or fruit of Fortune. On her head are a serpent, a liṅgā and a yoni. Preciously coloured like molten gold, the All-Powerful Goddess wears a divine garland and ornaments of the same colour.

Her marvellous radiance illumines the Universe. The fruit in her hand represents 'action', her club the 'power of action'; the 'power of knowing' ( Jñānā śhakti ) is her shield, 'tendency towards the Fourth Stage' ( turīyā-vṛitti ) is the chalice. The liṅgā on her head is the 'Person' ( puruṣhā tattvā ), the yoni is 'Nature' ( prakṛiti tattvā ), the serpent is 'Time'. The fruit in the hand of the Goddess signifies that she is the giver of the fruits, results of all actions; the club shows her to be the basis of the power of dispersion ( vikṣhepā śhakti ), i. e., the power of action ( kriyā ); the shield shows her to be the basis of the power of knowing, the chalice signifies that she is the sap of existence which is delight in the Self. The serpent,



the līṅgā and the yoni show her to be the shape of the Supreme Principle, the Parā-Brahman, support of the trilogy : Nature, Person and Time.

The Lady of the Spheres also represents the collected verses of the Eternal Wisdom, and she and the Arch-divinity of Fortune are one, although their attributes are different.

As the Beheaded ( Chhinnā mastā ) :

The Consciousness which presides over the evolving universe is represented as a headless body ( Kabandhā ), whose Energy is the Beheaded Chhinnā mastā. Progress and regress constantly take place in the world, but when the measure of regress is small and that of progress great, the Lady of the Spheres appears, whereas when progress is small and regress great, the Beheaded rules. Her 'meditation' is as follows :

प्रत्यालीढपदां सदैव दधतीं छिन्नं शिरः कर्तृका,  
दिग्बस्त्रां स्वकबन्धशोणितसुधाधारां पिवन्तीं मुदा ।  
नागावदशिरोमणिं त्रिनयनां हृद्युत्पलालङ्कृताम्,  
रत्यासक्त मनोमवोपरिदृढां ध्यायेज्जपासन्निभाम् ॥

"Her left foot ever forward in battle, she holds her severed head and a knife. Naked, she drinks voluptuously of the flow of the nectar of blood flowing from her beheaded body. The jewel on her forehead is held by a serpent, She has three eyes, her breasts are adorned with lotuses. Attracted to lust, she sits erect above the God of love. She looks like the red China-rose."

Her eyes are blue. On her heart lies a garland of blue lotuses.

The Fearful Goddess of the three Cities ( Tripurā Bhairavī ) :

The presiding deity of the world's decline is the Southern icon ( dakṣhiṇā mūrti ), or the Fearful Lord Time ( Kālā Bhairavā ). His Energy is the Fearful Goddess ( Bhairavī ). Her description for meditation is :

उद्यद्भानुसहस्रकान्तिमरुणक्षौमां शिरोमालिकाम्,  
रक्तालितपयोधरां जयवटीं विद्यामभीतिं वरम् ।  
हस्ताब्जैर्दधतीं त्रिनेत्रविलसद्भक्तारविन्दश्रियम्,  
देवीं बद्धहिमां शुबद्धमुकुटां वन्दे समन्दसिताम् ॥

( Bhairavī tantra )



"I bow to thee, who softly smilest with a glow crimson as that of a thousand risen suns, who wearest a silken veil and a garland of skulls. Blood smears thy breast, three voluptuous eyes adorn thy lotus face, the moon is in thy diadem. Thy lotus hands show the gestures of 'victory', sapience, the granting of boons and the allaying of fears."

The Vaporous ( Dhūmāvati ) :

The Energy presiding over the total misfortune of the universe is the Vaporous 'Dhūmāvati': because she has no male counterpart she is deemed a widow. The male element, the Person ( Puruṣhā ), here remains unmanifest. Consciousness, knowledge, are completely hidden. 'Meditation' ( Dhyānā ) on her is as follows :

विवर्णा चञ्चला दुष्टा दीर्घा च मलिनाम्बरा ।  
विमुक्तकुन्तला वै सा विधवा विरलद्विजा ॥  
काकध्वजरथारूढा विलम्बितपयोधरा ।  
शूर्पं हस्तातिरूक्षाक्षी पृतहस्ता वरानना ॥  
प्रवृद्धघोणा तु भृशं कुटिला कुटिलेक्षणा ।  
क्षुत्पिपासादिता नित्यं भयदा कलहास्पदा ॥

"A woman of unhealthy complexion restless, wicked, tall, with a dirty robe and flying hair ; with toothless gaps, she looks like a widow, and rides a chariot flying a pennon with a crow. With flaccid breasts, a winnowing basket in her hand, her eyes are cruel, her hands tremble, and her nose is long ; she is deceitful in behaviour, and sly in looks. Insatiably hungry and thirsty, she inspires fear and is an instigator of quarrels."

As the Deceitful ( Bagalā ) :

The Energy presiding in the individual being over the desire to destroy his enemies, and in the Universal Being over the wish to destroy, is the Deceitful Bagalā. She should be meditated on thus :

जिह्वाग्रमादाय करेण देवीं वामेन शत्रुपरिपीडयन्तीम् ।  
गदाभिघातेन च दक्षिणेन पीताम्बराढ्यां द्विभुजां नमामि ॥

"I bow to the two-armed goddess who with the right hand grasps the tongue of her enemy and with her left tortures him. She holds a mace and is clad in yellow."



The Elephant Power ( Mataṅgī ) :

Mataṅgā, the Elephant, is a name of the Lord of Sleep Śhivā. His Energy is Matāṅgī. Meditation on her is as follows:

श्यामां शुभ्रां शुमालां त्रिनयनकमलां रत्नसिंहासनस्थाम्,  
भक्ताभीष्टप्रदात्रीं सुरनिकरकरासेव्यकाञ्चां ऽभ्रियुग्माम् ।  
नीलाम्भोजां शुकान्तिं निशिचरनिकरारण्यदावाग्निरूपाम्,  
पाशं खड्गं चतुर्भुजैश्चक्रेकरैः खेटकञ्चुकाश्च,  
मातङ्गोमावहन्तीमभिमतफलदां मोदिनीं चिन्तयामि ॥

"We meditate on Mataṅgī, the Elephant-power, delight of the world. Dark, the white crescent in her garland, with her three lotus eyes, she sits resplendent on a jewelled throne, and fulfils the wishes of the devotees. Her two feet are honoured by the hosts of the Gods, she glows like the blue lotus, looking like the forest-fire which consumes the forest of demons. Holding in her four beautiful lotus hands the noose, sword, shield and elephant-hook, she gives to those who invoke her all they desire.

As the Lady of the Lotus ( Kamalā ) :

The Energy of the Person, who is Śhivā the Eternal ( Sadā Śhivā Puruṣhā ), is the Lady of the Lotus, Kamalā. Meditation on her is thus :

कान्त्या काञ्चनसन्निभां हिमगिरिप्ररव्यैश्चतुर्भुजैः,  
हस्तोत्क्षिप्त हिरण्मयामृतधरैरासिन्ध्यमानां श्रियम् ।  
विभ्राणां वरमञ्जयुग्मममयं हस्तैः किरीटोज्ज्वलाम्,  
क्षौमावद्वनितम्बविम्बवलितां वन्देऽरविन्दस्थिताम् ॥

"With golden complexion bathed in the stream of ambrosia flowing from golden vessels held in the trunks of four white elephants, she looks like the Himalayas. Her hands grant boons, allay fear, and hold two lotuses ; she has a brilliant diadem. Her hips, like ripe fruits, are loosely draped in a silken garment. We bow to her who stands upon a lotus."



### The Amorous, Lalitā:

The favourable aspect of the Supreme Being is Lalitā, who is the Universe.

### The Lady of Lust, Kāmeśhvarī :

The favourable aspect of the Supreme Being without attributes is called the Arch-left-hand Lord, Mahā Vāmā-Īśhvarā ; while the favourable aspect of the Supreme Being with attributes, which pervade his limbs with the joy of existence, is the Lady of Lust, Kāmeśhvarī.

The qualitless Lord of Sleep, Śhivā, when united with the Lady of Lust, can do even such acts as the manifesting of the Universe. But,

शिवः शक्त्या युक्तो यदि भवति शक्तः प्रभवितुम्,  
नचेदेवं देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि ।

"The Lord of Sleep, when separated from his Energy has no power even to move."

Without their Energies, the Creator Brahmā, the Pervader Viṣṇu, the Lord of Tears Rudrā, as well as their totality, the Supreme Lord, Īśhvarā, and beyond it, the Eternal Lord of Sleep, Sadā Śhivā, are spoken of as the Great Ghosts. The first four Gods are conceived of as the four bed-posts of the Goddess of Lust, Kāmā-Īśhī ; the Eternal Lord of Sleep is imagined as the bed-planks.

In the divine hand of the Lady of Lust, who takes shelter in the unqualified Principle, the Brahman, are a noose, an elephant-hook, a bow made of sugar-cane, and an arrow. Attachment is said to be the noose, enmity the elephant-hook, the mind the sugar-cane bow, words and objects of the senses the arrows of flowers. Another version has it that :

इच्छाशक्तिमयं पाशमकुशं ज्ञानरूपिणम् ।

क्रियाशक्तिमये बाणधनुयी दधदुज्ज्वलम् ॥

"The noose is the power of desire, the elephant-hook represents knowledge, the brilliance of the bow and arrow is the power to act."



## THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GODDESS IN THE DEVĪ SUKTA

The Devī Suktā aims to show that it is the absolute Supreme Principle, the Parā-Brahman, which is known as the Goddess, the Devī.

The Goddess herself is made to say :

"I it is who roam as the Lord of Tears ( Rudrā ) or the In-Dweller ( Vasu ), I am the Sun ( Ādityā ) and the Gods who guard the world ( Viśhvā devā ). Indrā the king of Heaven, Fire ( Agni ), and the Horse headed twins ( Aśvinīkumārā's ) are under my control. I am the giver of the fruit of action to the performer of Ritual Sacrifices which nourish the Gods with offerings.

I am the Ruler, the giver of wealth, the knower of the essence of things. I come first in all Ritual Sacrifices, the manifest universe is my shape, [ therefore ] the Gods have backed me. They wished to enter the Sun. The shape of the Spatial Universe is my shape. Whatever is done anywhere, belongs to me in every way in every place.

From me comes the food you eat, all that you see, to which you bow, as well as the words you hear. Those who do not acknowledge me are destroyed. O thou learned in the Sacred Scripture, hear with respect that which I tell to thee.

It is I who govern that Principle of all, the Brahman, whom men and Gods worship. I become whatever I wish to become, fearful or great. I become the Creator Brahmā, the Seers, and the knowledge beautiful. At the time of the conquest of the three cities, it is I who pull the string of the bow of the Lord of Tears against the murderous Brahmadvīṭ Titan. To gladden those who praise me, I fight their enemies, I become the sphere of space, highest form of the Supreme Self. As cloth is made from thread, so Ether and all the world is made of the Supreme Self. I am the primeval Waters ( Ap ), pervading the ocean-like Supreme Self<sup>1</sup> like a thought. And I, the All-Powerful

1. समुद्रवन्ति प्राणिनोऽस्मादिति समुद्रः परमात्मा

"Living beings dissolve together in Him, hence the Supreme Self is called an Ocean ( Samudrā )."



Goddess, am the endless conscious cause of the Spatial Universe which spreads within without and in the midst of this ocean. I dwell therefore in all beings, pervading them. Touching the end of space (dyu-lokā) and all other boundaries with my body whose substance is Power of Illusion, I stand as the causal state of all. Above the Earthly world, it is I who create the Father (Pitā), that is, Ether. The Seer, my cause made of water (अमय), dwells in the midst of the water of the Ocean. Becoming his daughter I see in a vision this Devī Suktā. In other words, in the Ocean, that is, in the Intermediary sphere of space, (antarikṣhā) dwells my cause, the Principial faculty of Consciousness (Brahmā-Chaitanyā) in the body 'made of water' of the Gods. I am the beginning of all existing things and of all action. Like wind which acts of itself without instigation; so I, as transcendent Energy, perform all actions at my own pleasure. I exist beyond space and beyond earth. I am Principial Consciousness, aloof from all things, unconcerned."

#### THE RITUAL OF WORSHIP

##### The Water :

The water offered to wash the feet (pādyā) of the Divine Mother symbolizes the perception of the divine Trinity Existence-Consciousness-Bliss pervading all the forms and names which constitute the moving Universe. The water-offering (arghyā) symbolizes the perception of the Ultimate Principle Brahman, pervading the subtle world. Perception of the Principle as pervading perception itself is the water said to be offered to rinse the mouth. The bathing of the image symbolizes the perception of Consciousness and Bliss pervading the three fundamental qualities. To meditate, seeing in the Lady of Lust, Kāmeśhvarī, who embodies Consciousness, the object of all mental movements, is the consecration of the water.

##### The Ornaments :

The different ornaments offered symbolize qualities (of the Supreme Divinity), namely, to be without disguise (nirāñjanātvā), to be



incorruptible (ajarātvā), ignorant of sorrow (aśhokatvā), immortal (amṛitātvā) and so on.

The Perfume :

The offering of perfume is the perception of Pure Consciousness pervading the earth element of which one's own body is made.

The Flowers :

The flower-offering is the perception of Pure Consciousness pervading the ether element.

The Incense :

The offering of incense is the perception of Pure Consciousness pervading the air element.

The Lamp :

The lamp-offering is the perception of Pure Consciousness pervading the fire element.

The Edibles :

The food-offering is the perception of the principle of immortality.

The Rice :

The rice-offering is the perception of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss in all things.

Lauds :

The offering of praise is the dissolution of words into the Principle, the Brahman.

The Waving of Lights :

The waving of lights is the discarding of the object of thought which is the inanimate world.

The Obeisance :

The obeisance is the dissolution of all thought into the Principle, the Brahman.



## PRAISE OF THE GODDESS

महिमानं यदुत्कीर्त्य तव संहियते वचः ।  
श्रमेण तदशक्यं वा न गुणानामियत्तया ॥

"Singing thy praise, I halt through lassitude or find not words for thy qualities, not that thy qualities have an end."

All must persistently ask from the Mother the things they desire.

रूपं देहि जयं देहि यशो देहि द्विषो जहि ।

"Give me beauty, give me success, give me fame, defeat mine enemies."

सुरासुरशिरोरत्ननिघृष्टचरणेऽम्बिके ।

"O Mother ! Gods and Titans brush thy feet with the jewels of their diadems."

कृणेन संस्तुते देवि शश्वद्भक्त्या तथाम्बिके ।

"O Mother Goddess ! ever praised with devotion by the Dark Lord."

The All-Powerful Goddess is unknowable, limitless, one and multiple, everything. The Great Teacher Śhaṅkarāchāryā in beautiful words expressed the dual shape of the All-Powerful Goddess, qualified and non-qualified. Saying—

निमेषोन्मेषाभ्यां प्रलम्बमुदयं याति जगती  
तवेत्याहुः सन्तो धरणिधरराजन्यतनये ।  
तदुन्मेषाज्जातं जगदिदमशेषं प्रलयतः  
परित्रातुं शङ्के परिहृतनिमेषास्तव दृशः ॥

"O Daughter of the king of Mountains ! the saints say that through the closing and opening of thine eyelids the universe arises or is destroyed. This world in its totality is destroyed at the closing of thine eyelid, hence in fear of destroying, thou remainest for ever without closing thine eyes."



गिरामाहुदे वौ द्रुहिणगृहिणीमागमविदो-  
 हरेः पत्नी पद्मा हरसहचरोमद्रितनयाम् ।  
 तुरीया कापि त्वं दुरधिगमनिःसीममहिमे,  
 महामाये विश्वं भ्रमयसि परब्रह्महिमो ॥

"Thou art called Speech, the Goddess, daughter of the Creator. O Lady of the lotus ! thou art the consort of the Remover of pain (Hari = Viṣṇu). Thou wanderest with the Remover of sorrow (Harā—Śhivā). Daughter of the mountain ! Thy body is the fourth stage, the Unmanifest, difficult to attain. Thy greatness is beyond reach. O Great Illusion ! Thou makest the world to move round and art the consort of the Supreme Principle."

The importance of devotion towards her is great. By the link of devotion, the devotee gets the All-Powerful into his power. This devotion is also itself the form of the Goddess. Besides being Energy, Devotion and Transcendent Knowledge, Supreme Bliss, the sweetness of the Supreme Principle, ocean of ambrosia, is also the form of the Goddess. Some explain in the following way the mystery of the five 'M's, the five practices of the left-hand way, the names of which all begin in Sanskrit by the letter M, and which are connected with wine (Madyā), meat (Mansā), fish (Matsyā), gesture (Mudrā) and copulation (Maithunā).

"Drinking the wine which flows from the lunar womb of the Centre of the thousand petals (at the summit of the head), killing with the sword of knowledge lust, anger, greed, delusion and other demoniacal beasts, and cooking the fish of deceit, calumny, envy, etc., showing the gestures of hope, desire and contempt, and enjoying the lustful beauties found along the spinal chord, a man attains to equanimity (Samā rasyā)."

य एवं वेद स शोकं तरति

"He who knows this crosses beyond sorrow."



## "A TEMPLE UNDER CONSTRUCTION"

by NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

The road which leads from Puri to the temple of Konarak crosses the railway line about half a mile to the east of the Indradyumna Tank, in the eastern portion of the town. About one furlong, or a little more, from this crossing is situated the temple of Siddha Mahāvīra. The temple is of the Bhadra order, and tradition says that it was built by King Indradyumna himself. But that apart, there is nothing in the building itself which can give any hint of its antiquity; except the image of Mahāvīra which is worshipped within and a few stray pieces of sculpture set in the walls, here and there: these sculptures have in them the appearance of antiquity. Some of the pieces have been set in niches, or merely stuck to the walls by means of plaster. Among them, a remarkable piece was noticed some time ago by Shri Suryanarayan Das of Puri; and he drew my attention to it when I was in Puri in October last.

The sculptured panel referred to above, is about a foot long, and set in plaster in one of the corners of the northern face of the temple of Mahāvīra. It shows a temple in process of construction; and as such, it possesses very great importance from the point of view of architectural history. The only other pieces of sculpture of a like nature, with which I am acquainted, come from the temples of Khajuraho in Central India. In one of them a mason is engaged in blocking out a piece of stone while he sits upon the ground, while six labourers are shown carrying a carved block slung from the middle of a long wooden pole. Just beside that is shown the picture of a man and woman locked in amorous embrace. But we have not hitherto seen any represen-



tation showing how blocks of stone were actually lifted to the top of temples, which often reached great heights : the panel in Siddha Mahāvīra shows how that was actually done ( inset on p. 198 ).

The temple depicted in that panel, has been constructed up to the end of the 'bāṛa', the construction of the 'gaṇḍi' has proceeded to a slight extent ; and two masons are shown working at the edges of the construction. A person, with a projecting coiffure, stands a little away in front, with one hand raised ; probably in the act of giving some direction to the masons. A much weathered image of a man appears at the foot of the temple, near the king ; and it is not unlikely that this may be the image of the chief architect receiving instructions from the king. An attendant holds an umbrella over the head of the king, from behind. On the farther side of the temple, where a piece of stone is being carried up an inclined plane, there stands a Sādhu, with a 'kamaṇḍalu' slung from his left arm, while his right hand is apparently raised in a pose of benediction. The weathered image of a soldier, carrying a shield and arms, comes after that ; while above the whole scene, is a frieze containing pictures of a number of ducks ; this being technically known as a 'haṃsalahari' ( not shown in the reproduction ).

The most interesting portion of the relief consists of the inclined plane, which reaches from the ground to the top of the 'bāṛa.' One end rests on the ground, while the other is on the highest part of the construction itself. It has three pillars to support it, each pillar being broader at the top than below.

The block of stone, which is being carried up, is rectangular in shape. It has a long pole tied with ropes to its upper surface. Each end of that pole is slung by means of ropes, through whose upper end carrying poles have been inserted. The two carrying poles rest on the shoulders of two workmen each, who are shown labouring their way up the inclined plane. The block of stone in question has actually been lifted off the ground while being carried up. This means that it cannot be a very heavy piece, for four men are able to lift it off the ground by their unaided strength. The question is, how were still heavier blocks actually carried up to great heights. It is not unlikely that such blocks of stone were dragged over wooden rollers or stone balls laid along the



inclined plane for the time being. But there is nothing in the present sculpture to show how that was actually done.



Anyway, the importance of the present piece lies in the fact that it tells us how the inclined plane was actually constructed. There is a tradition current in Orissa that, as a temple was gradually built up, a solid earthen slope was built up on one side of it from the ground to the top of the construction ; and stone blocks were carried up this solid slope in course of the work. The panel in Siddha Mahāvīra tells a different story ; and that much is solid gain for our purposes.

Now for the age of the sculpture. The carving itself is crude ; and as it is in coarse sandstone, the piece has suffered considerably from the effects of weathering. Personally I have a suspicion that it came originally from the temple of Konarak ; Siddha Mahāvīra is, as we have said, nearly on the way from Puri to Konarak ; and it is also well-known that a large number of carved pieces of stone have been carried away from the latter place, from time to time, and set in the face of small village shrines in the neighbouring villages. The present piece seems to be one like that ; and if my suspicion is justified, it gives an added interest to the panel described above. The stone is of a coarse variety ; and belongs to the celebrated Athgarh Series, and of a texture with which we are familiar in the temple of Konarak itself. The amount of weathering to which it had been subjected before it was brought to the temple of Siddha Mahāvīra, is exactly equal to what we are accustomed to associate with carvings near the ground at Konarak, reached easily by blasts of wind and sand, before the protective ring of pines was planted there by the Public Works Department. Of course, all this is no proof ; but it is well to remember that the rest of the temple of Siddha Mahāvīra does not at all show any evidence of weathering, such as we find associated with the piece of sculpture in question.

In any case, although we may not be able to assign a definite date to this piece of sculpture, it throws new light upon the actual work of construction of a temple.



## A DEED OF ADOPTION AND ITS RELIEFS

by ST. KRAMRISCH

A light yellow metal tablet (H. c. 10½")<sup>1</sup> cast in relief on its front side and having a Telugu inscription engraved on its back (Pls. XIV-XV)<sup>2</sup>, records an adoption which was effected in Golconda, near the present Hyderabad, in the year 1294 A. D. (Śaka 1217) on Thursday, the 30th November.

Five craftsmen being Brāhmaṇas by their calling and caste, collectively adopted as their son a young man, a Seddi of the Komadi class, a Vaiśya, and set him up as a goldsmith.<sup>3</sup> As their adopted son however he had to retain his own caste. The reasons which led to this adoption were: The young Seddi, Baccumalli by name, had lost 12,700 Varāhas over some money transaction. This sum, equivalent to 44,450 or 50,800 Rupees he was unable to repay. None of his relatives or friends helped him. He fell at the feet of the five Ācāryas who represented the "Five Faces" or "Five-Brahmās", the community of craftsmen. They raised the amount, paid off his debt and contributed towards his livelihood which he was to earn as a goldsmith. It is to be assumed that the young man had lost the money through no fault of his and being abandoned by friends and relatives the "Five-Brahmās" or "Five Faces" succoured him on his proving his readiness, if not his talent, for the calling of a goldsmith.

This profession, as the designation Bangāru Seddi proves, was one of the traditional callings of the Seddis (śreṣṭhī) and Baccumalli

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1. In the collection of Mataprasad Sitaram, Benares.

2. Photographs by B. Burnier.

3. In the Telugu country the goldsmiths are Bangāru Seddis.



might have been a goldsmith by training although the monetary side of this profession seems to have attracted him prior to the calamity which befell him in this connection, as much as the exercise of his craftsmanship. The deed of adoption proves a raising of status of a profession practised by the Seddis, who are Vaiśyas, to that of the "Five Faces" or the totality of craftsmen whose 'origin' from Viśvakarman, had established them as Brāhmaṇas.

This adoption took place at the time of Mallika (Maulika) Vibhurāma Pakṣāvu, "the best of the race of Rāma," who may have been Pratāparudra II<sup>1</sup>.

The 5 Ācāryas, whose names are given in the inscription, represented the "Five Faces" in the city of Golconda.

The origin and meaning of this designation is given in the first 32 lines of the inscription which has 56 lines altogether.

The "Five-Brahmās" have their origin in the Supreme Brahman, manifested in the five faces of the Supreme Śiva, who is Viśvakarman, the architect of the Universe. The five faces of Śiva are Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Īśāna; from these five faces are 'born' five prototypal architects and craftsmen: Manu, Maya, Tvaṣṭaka, Śilpaka and Viśvajñā, respectively. Five arch-craftsmen, born from the five faces of Śiva, these "Five-Brahmās" as "Five faces", are represented by the five Ācāryas of the city of Golconda at the time of the inscription.

The direct 'face-born', mind-born origin of the architect and craftsman from the Supreme Principle is thus 'illustrated'. This derivation has a close analogy in the account of the ontological origin of the architect, etc., in the 'Mānasāra', II. 1-20<sup>2</sup>. There the four faces of the Supreme Śiva, Viśvakarmā, represent Viśvakarmā, Maya, Manu and Tvaṣṭṛ, and their sons are: the Sthapati, the master architect, the Sūtragrahin or surveyor, the Takṣaka or sculptor and the Vardhaki who is also a

1. 'Epigraphia Indica,' vol. VI. p. 112; cf. 'Pratāparudrayaśobhūṣaṇa,' Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series, LXV, Introduction.

2. The 'Mānasāra,' a South Indian Vāstusāstra, appears to be approximately of the same age as the Golconda inscript in also 'The Hindu Temple,' p. 270.



painter. While the first four of the Pañcabrahmās might have practised their crafts in a similar division, the domain of Viśvajñā, 'the knower of the all' remains undefined; this name however and his position as the fifth and upward face seem to designate him as the Sthāpaka, the architect priest or craftsman priest.

The deed of adoption, engraved at the back of the copperplate is surmounted by a Liṅga. The "Five-Brahmās" practised the pure Śaiva rites (śuddhaśivācāra); they were Viraśaivas or Liṅgāyatas. Less crudely drawn than the Liṅga above the inscription is the scroll border at its bottom (Pl. XV). Howsoever conscious of the high origin of their calling the Five-Brahmās were, the craftsmanship of the reliefs on the front of the copperplate does not show it (Pl. XIV).

The tablet is surmounted by a Face of Glory (Kīrttimukha) from whose open mouth appears to have issued the five-cusped arch which comprises the width of the tablet. This symbol of the 'Five-Brahmās' enshrines as it were the images in the top panel which are shown in lively attitudes. The tablet is divided into five zones; they are separated from one another by a thin fillet which, together with the rim of the copperplate, frames the five rows of figured scenes. The tablet has been broken immediately below the top panel where four circular holes have been made subsequently for the purpose of keeping in position the two broken parts.

The mask of the Kīrttimukha, with its lateral peaks and lolling tongue corresponding to the knobs of the lateral arches, is the centre of their fluid curves. While they sum up the entire tablet they are particularly the frame of the top panel in which sun and moon, and the images of Śiva together with Nandin, Viṣṇu and Brahmā are displayed on the flat ground on which are incised Garuḍa and Haṃsa. Śiva is shown as Naṭarāja; while there is little of the dance in his movement it points towards Brahmā, whose figure on the right is shown approaching, and as responsive by the movement of its arms as is the figure of Viṣṇu, on the left.

In the centre of the second panel the image of the Goddess, seated on a lion throne, her upper hands holding the trident and Damaru, is approached by a devotee carrying a Karaṇḍa and holding a Kamaṇḍalu.



He wears high wooden sandals on which are placed also Śiva's dancing feet. Sages of the Vīraśaivas put on high wooden sandals when worshipping and thus they enter the shrine. This figure might depict the Viśvajñā. Behind him, the hands joined in 'añjali-mudrā' is the ape-faced Hanumān (?). Between the Devī and the dancing Gaṇeśa a large and round mirror is placed, on the right of the panel.

In the two following rows the craftsmen are shown at work. The one seated on the left appears to be polishing a metal image with the help of a wheel which rotates on a horizontal axis fixed at the ends. The second figure kneels over a nearly complete, three-faced image and appears to chase the lines on its neck.

The following figure is seated near an anvil on which it seems to have placed the red-hot iron which the figure standing opposite is going to strike. Above the seated figure, an axe is shown and a kind of hoe or 'plough'; the right half of the panel depicts the work of a blacksmith and the left half that of a metal smith, who chases and polishes the cast image.

In the next panel too, a metal smith is shown working on an image, which is a standing one, while a seated image of a goddess confronts the spectator. It is surrounded by the tools used by goldsmiths, a fire vessel, a stamper, a hammer and various chisels. This part of the panel shows the establishment of the adopted son, and himself at work as a goldsmith.

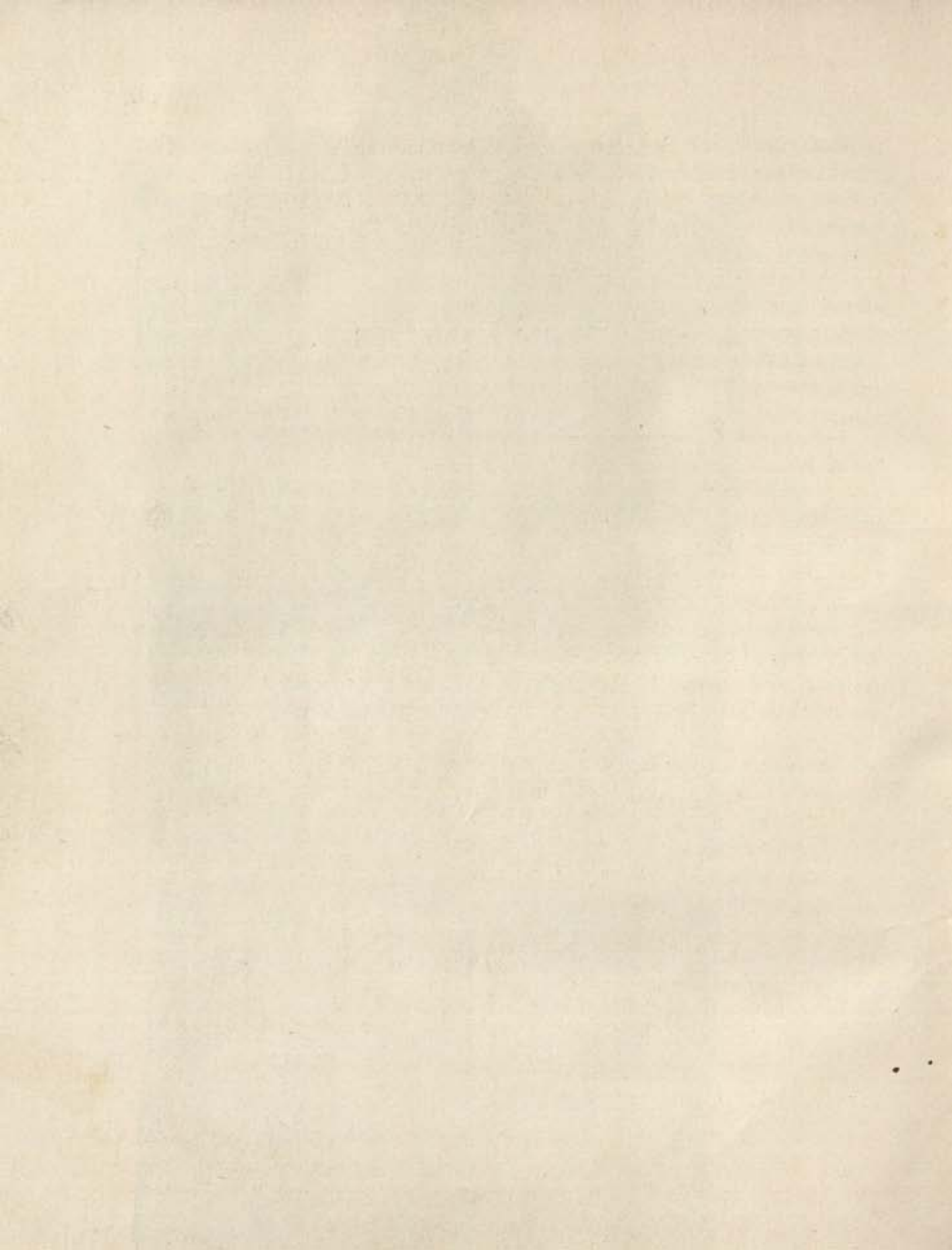
The horseman brandishing a lance, on the right of this panel, the swordsman in the bottom row and the two animals (horses?) are not referred to in the inscription. Do they represent the Kṣatriyas and their horses for whom the Pañcabrahmās made lance and sword as well just as they made the plough and axe, chisels and mallet, etc., and ritual implements, such as the mirror in the second row as well as the images of the gods?

The square panel in the extreme right of the bottom row has a seated figure below a tree, the hands folded in 'añjali-mudrā'. Does it show the donor, the Pañcabrahmās collectively, and is it their standard Hanumān, who represents them? The figure is seen in front view, the proper view for the gods and their images (excepting Gaṇeśa's. --











head, in the second panel) while the human figures in their actions are represented in profile, on the tablet.

The following five classes of craftsmen are recognized in the Andhra country: The goldsmith, Vardhaki; the carpenter, Takṣaka; and the workers in bell-metal, copper and iron.<sup>1</sup> This present day classification appears, from the tablet, to have been valid at the time of the deed of adoption, in more than one respect. Tvaṣṭaka and Śilpaka, to whom correspond, in the 'Mānasāra,' the Takṣaka and Vardhaki, are the two classes of craftsmen who have their established position in the hierarchy of craftsmen in Vāstuśāstra, the architectural tradition. The Vardhaki, however, as shown in the tablet and also by the present day use of the word in the Telugu country, has been identified with the goldsmith, the Svarṇakāra.

The high origin of the five classes or craftsmen appears to have been their birthright from the days when they made the ritual implements for Vedic sacrifices; it remained their privilege when they made the images and ritual objects required for worship (pūjā) and also the tools of peace and war for the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas.

A plough or a mallet are carved on many a memorial stone (Vīragal) in the Deccan<sup>2</sup>. They indicate the caste or profession of the hero thus commemorated. Sun and moon, and the Face of Glory, the Kīrtti-mukha, from whose mouth issue many cusps and scrolls crown these memorial stones. The heroic death and the life of the person commemorated are illustrated in animated and crowded compositions within parallel compartments. Though made with a different object and in a different material the metal tablet (Pls. XIV-XV) with its sparse, squat figures in relief, and other figures as well as a few leaves, etc. incised on the gleaming ground, is a humble member of the family of Vīragals, frequent in the Deccan from the tenth Century.

1. The 'Andhravācaspatya' gives the following five classes of craftsmen: Vāṭṭangi or Vardhaki or Svarṇakārudu; 2. Kāṣṭhatakṣudu, the carpenter; 3. Kāṁṣyakārudu, the worker in bell metal; 4. Tāmrakuṭṭakudu, the coppersmith and 5. Lohakārudu, the blacksmith.

Cf. however 'Mānasāra', II. 1-20; 'Śilparatna', I. 29-42, and also 'Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa', I. X. 20-23.

2. H. Cousens, 'The Chālukyan Architecture', ASI, NIS, vol. XLII. Pls. OLIII-VII.



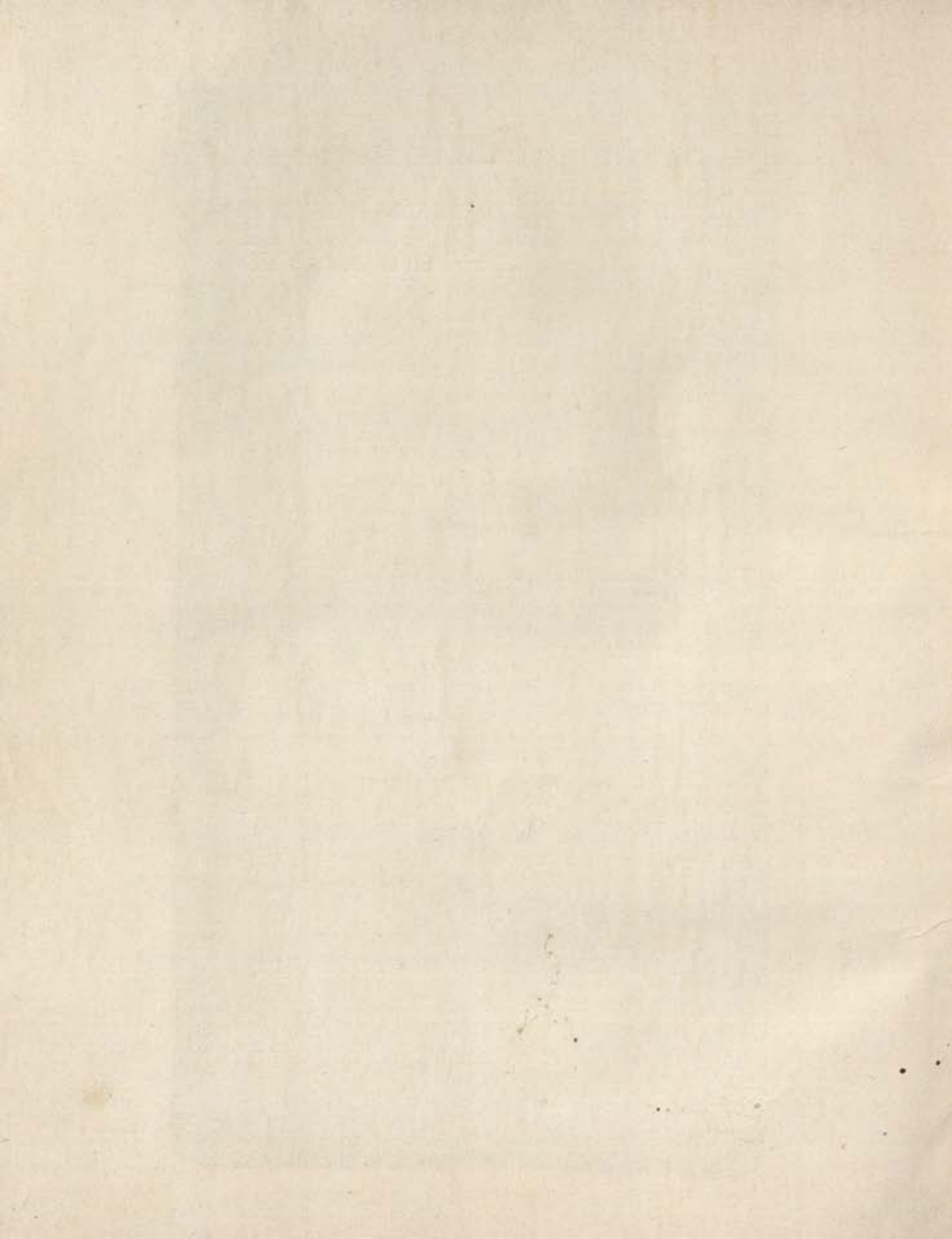
## TRANSLITERATION OF THE INSCRIPTION 1

1. Śrīmatparaśivaviśvakarmapañcānanamu
2. khodbhavulaina catussāgaraparyantamrakṣakodbha
3. vulaina nityam vibhūtirudrākṣamālimakarakuṇḍalām
4. duramdharulaina śrīmadvedoktasajjanaśuddhaśivācārasampanna-  
pannagādhiśva
5. rulaina śrīmatsvastisamastaprasastalokavistārakatribhuvanabhuvini-  
nirmīto
6. oddhāra Anantavedaśabdaśāstrapurāṇapārāvāra gāmbhīryadhīrad-  
hīrodharuṇa jagatihi
7. takāruṇya ghanaghana vāhana anumaddhvaja vijayābhirāma  
kanakakuṇḍalābharuṇa rana
8. mukha viśvamkaṇṇa anumanta Pedhoṭipuravarādhiśvarulaina  
śrīmatkālikādevi Kamareśva
9. ra devara divyaśrīpādapadmārādhurulaina pariccamoka parabrah-  
māku pañcabrahmālu vutti.
10. na kramam. Mano pūrvamukaṇṇaiva mayānām dakṣanastadhā  
tvaṣṭakam paścamuśaiva Śilpakāvu
11. ttarastadā Viśvijnāvūrdammū ( rma ) kaṇṇa caiva pañcasabattubrā-  
hmaṇaḥ. Tūrpūrvadiśābhāgam
12. buna sajjōjātamukambuna pu ( vir ) divaruṇḍina va ( sa ) sa deva-  
tatvambuna sivakalādisam
13. Varusagotrodbhavulaina Manubrahmāvudbhavimce Dakṣiṇadiśā-  
bhāgambuna Vāmadeva
14. Mukhambuna Āpahatatvambuna adhinārāyaṇasta ( tta ) mbhag-  
ulaina Sanātaruṣigotrodbha
15. vuni Diśākabrahmāudbhaviṇce Paścimadiśābhāgambuna Aghora-  
mukhambulaina Ta
16. ....Pādabrahmaṇa udaina abhuvanasarūṣigotroddbhavulaina
17. ....taruvadabrahma.....nakadaina Abhuvina para Saruvi-  
ojodbhavaina
18. Ina Aṣṭabrahmāvudbhaviṇce vuttaradiśābhāgambuna Tatpuruṣ-  
abhāgambuna vā



[illegible]







19. yutatavambuna Indramsubhavu.....pratnasaruṣigotrodbhavul-  
aina śilpi
20. brahmāudbhviñce ūrdhvadiśābhāgambuna.....śānyamokamb-  
una gaganatatvambuna
21. Sūryamsusamkhyāundaina Suparṇasarūṣanātodbhavulaina Viśv-  
ajna Brahmāvudbhaviñci. Sokaṃ. Manū ( no ) nām Śvetavana-  
mca mrvarṇaṃ Mayastadā Tvaṣṭakaṃ tāmra
22. varṇaṃ ca Śilpinām Dhūmra ( Sabhra ) varṇayo viśvajnā ye  
( hema ) mavarṇaṃ ca Pañcarupaparakīrti
23. taḥ. Mano rajatasūtraṃ ca Mayānām padmasūtrayoḥ Tvaṣṭakaṃ  
tāmrasūtraṃ ca Śi
24. Ipinām kārpaśasūtrayoḥ Viśvajnā suvarṇasūtraṃ ca pancasūtraṃ  
tu brahma
25. ṇaḥ. Mano trikoṇagu ( nopm ) dhaum ca Mayānām catuṣkoṇayoḥ  
Tvaṣṭakaṃ vaṭṭalākāraṃ
26. ṣatkoṇaṃ Śilpikastadā ( dhā ) Viśvajnā aṣṭakoṇaṃ ca pañcagūṇa  
( koṇa ) pratīrtitaḥ. Manu ( no )
27. Bilvavṛkṣaṃ ca Mayānām Vataravṛkṣayoḥ Tvaṣṭā Aśvaddhav-  
ṛkṣaṃ ca Palāsa
28. Śilpakascasca ( stadhā ) viśvajnā Arkavṛkṣaṃ ca Pañcavṛkṣā Pra-  
kīrtitaḥ. Mano ( sruta ) syūta
29. homaṃ ca Mayānām ru ( da ) dhi ( di ) bhūmayoḥ Tvaṣṭakaṃ  
maduvomaṃ ca Śilpikokṣurasam
30. tadhā Viśvjnā iṅṣīrasmaṃ ca pancāmṛta prakīrtitaḥ. Rgvedaṃ ca  
Ma
31. nuścaiva Yarvedaṃ Mayastatdhā Tvaṣṭakaṃ Sāmavedaṃ ca  
iadhavāṇa Śilpakast ( a ) thā
32. Viśvjnā Prānath ( dh ) aṃ ca pañcavedaṃ tu brāhmaṇaḥ. Pañcab-  
rahmālu Pañcaśa
33. kt ( ty ) ālu suvivāṭhaṃ sesukunāru. Svastiśrīvijayābhayaśāliva-  
hanaśaka
34. Varaṣambhalu 1216 Aguneti asminvartamāna vyāvahārike cāndr-  
amāna Īsvara nāma vaśara Kārtika Śuddhadaśamī Guruvāraṃ  
GOLKONDA Patnamāndu
35. MALLIKE VIBHURĀMPAKṢĀVU kalamonduna VĀNUG-



## ANṬI KĀMĀKṢĀCĀRI SILAMBADRPPA Ā

36. CĀRI CITTĀRU VĪRAPPĀ ĀCĀRI MUNIGAṆḌI APPĀV-  
UĀCĀRI DHAVALÉSUMAKONḌA
37. ĀCĀRI ivaru ayaidāyi PĀNCĀNANAM vāru ganumuka (kha)  
Iuvuṇḍa ga KOMADIBA
38. CCUMALISEDḌI Sarābhusvatya Sesina Ṣuvaṇḍina Mandh  
( ya ) ānapannaṇḍu veyilayo
39. nūru varahālu naṣṭaṃ voccindi gaṇuka vāri suttaṭakkalu  
bandhugulu evarinnu ādarincaleka poyināru gaṇuka
40. appuḍu PĀNCĀNANAM vāri ( ru ) Pādālupaṭṭukum
41. de pannaṇḍu Veyalu (a) nnūru varahālu icci Vedipiṇci pi (e)  
ṣuṇi hanuman
42. tamudraveṣi aidinamula okkapeddu uṇci vibhūtirudrākṣamu-  
ṭṭaṃchitama
43. aṭike (ge) ṣuvaṇḍina panasakumāruṇi ga cesugunnāru vādu  
bratikedānike atha
44. svasinnāru SAMVATSARA 1 ki GATTALA Kolamike 1 ki  
VARAHĀ SAMVATSARA 1 ki Mudukoli
45. miki Māda Samvatsara 1 ki Dāyike Māda pendali Māda vas-  
tramiccēdi
46. oduḡurmūrtam 1 ki pāvu vastramiccēti (di) pamspavāṇi koṭṭa-  
rādu tiṭṭarādu
47. divānardaallato ceppi Uda(ida) Sāsanam sesinattalaaide (te)  
vādu panasakatti topo
48. codusukunina vāni raktaṃ cūdarādu cusina vāri illu nagaladu  
pana
49. sabadaiaya varṇam tappi marivāka varṇani adagarādu Saliven-  
taralovuta
50. kaṃ saṃtakam Saṃtarppaṇamulo annamu mottarādu i Pana-  
sakumāruniki
51. vānivādu arudāyivādu idi evaru tappiṇcina pitru mā
52. tulakuttappinattulu Kāṣilo ḡorātyā śīśuhatyā brahmahatyā  
strīhatyā
53. cesina pāpana peduru i śāsanamandu unde prakāraram catussā-  
garapa



54. riyantamulo unde Viśvabrahmā lu paka kannadipiñce divāniki sā  
 55. kṣi hariharādule sākṣi Kālikādevi pādame sākṣi i akkacapro  
 56. lu Pañcabrahmālu cevralu iti kālikādevi rakṣiñcavalanu.

## TRANSLATION I

[ Lines 1-10 ] The origin of the "Five-Brahmās" [is] in Para-Brahman, through the five faces of Paraśiva who is Viśvakarman, Protector of the [ whole earth ] bounded by the four oceans, who is always [ besmeared ] with ashes, holds a rosary and wears Makara earrings, the Lord of Serpents. [ The "Five-Brahmās" ] are the followers of the pure Śaiva rites (Śuddha-Śivācāra) given in the Vedas; they have spread [ the Vīraśaiva principles ] in all the well-known, auspicious places and elevated [ thereby ] the Three Worlds; they have crossed to the other shore of the ocean of the Veda [ which has neither beginning ] no[r] end, the Śabdaśāstra [ Vyākaraṇa ] and Purāṇas, they possess deep knowledge, are the bravest amongst the brave, and kind to all [ beings ].

They have Hanumān, the air-borne, in their flag and daily worship the lotus feet of the Goddess Kālikā, Kāmareśvara [ Kuvera ] of the city of Pedhoti,—Hanumān who is beautiful by his conquests, always victorious, wears golden earrings, [is] fierce looking and the best amongst the monkeys of this world.

[ L. 10-11 ] Manu from the eastern face, Maya from the southern face, Tvaṣṭaka from the western face, Śilpaka from the northern face, Viśvajñā from the upward face, these are the "Five-Brahmās."

[ L. 11-13 ] The Manubrahmā [ the Manu brahmins ] was born from the eastern direction, the face of Sadyojāta, from the Tatva of Pṛthivī and from the Gotra of the Sage Gakusa [ Sanāga ]<sup>2</sup>; they are 16 in number.

1. By Pandit K. Sankara Sarma and S. Kramach.

2. Sanāga, Sanātana, Abobhūṇa, Praśna, and Suparṇa are the founders of the five Gotras; their origin is from Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras ('Mahārāṣṭra Jñānakōśa').



[ L.13-15 ] The Diśākabrahmā ( Maya ) was born from the southern direction, the face of Vāmadeva, the Tatva of water, 'adhinārāyaṇastambha-gulaina' .....<sup>1</sup>from the Gotra of Sanāta [ Sanātana ].

[ L. 15-18 ] Aṣṭabrahmā ( Tvaṣṭā ) was born from the western direction, the face of Aghora.....from the Gotra of the Sage Abhuvina ( Ahobhuna ).

[ L. 18-20 ] The Śilpibrahmā was born from the northern direction, the face of Tatpuruṣa, the Tatva of wind ( Vāyu ).....from the Gotra of Sage Pratna [ Praśna ] who is descended from Indra [ Aṅgiras ].

[ L. 20-21 ] The Viśvajñā-brahmā was born from the upward direction, the face of Īśāna, the Tatva of Ākāśa (ether) from the Gotra of the Sage Suparṇa, twelve in number.—Verse :

[ L. 21-23 ]<sup>2</sup> The colour white is for Manu, smoke colour ( dhūmra ) for Maya, red like copper for Tvaṣṭā, a variegated colour for Śilpin and a golden colour for Viśvajñā, these are the five colours ( rūpa ).

[ L. 23-25 ] A silver thread for Manu, the fibre of lotus for Maya, thread made of copper for Tvaṣṭā, cotton thread for Śilpin and thread made of gold for Viśvajñā, these are the five threads for the Brahmās.

[ L. 25-26 ] The triangle for Manu, rectangle for Maya, circle for Tvaṣṭā, the hexagon for Śilpin, and the octagon for Viśvajñā ; these are the five shapes [ koṇa ].

[ L. 26-28 ] The trees Bilva, Vāṭa, Aśvatṭha, Palāśa and Arka are the five trees proper to Manu, Maya, Tvaṣṭā, Śilpin and Viśvajñā respectively.

[ L. 28-30 ] These are the five nectars ( amṛta ) : ghee, curd, honey, juice of sugarcane and milk, for Manu, Maya, Tvaṣṭā, Śilpin and Viśvajñā respectively.

[ L. 30-32 ] R̥g-veda, Yajur-veda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaveda and Prāṇaveda [ Purāṇa ] are the five Vedas for the Brahmās, Manu, Maya, Tvaṣṭā, Śilpin and Viśvajñā.

[ L. 32-33 ] These five Brahmās were intermarrying in these five classes [ only ].

1. This passage could not be translated.

2. Lines 21—32 are in verse.



[ L. 33-34 ] [ In ] the auspicious year 1217 of the Śaka era of Śālivāhana, in the cyclic year Īsvara, month Kārtika, on the tenth day of the lunar fortnight, Thursday, at the time of Mallika Vibhurāma Pakṣāvu in the city of Golkonda,

[ L. 34-37 ] Vānugaṇṭi Kāmākṣācāri, Silambadrppa Ācāri, Cittāru Vīrappa Ācāri, Munigaṇḍi Appāvu Ācāri, Dhavalesumakoṇḍa Ācāri, these five were respected and regarded as the "Five Faces".

[ L. 37-39 ] The Komadi Baccumalli-seddi sustained a loss of about 12,700 Varāhas in a money transaction.

[ L. 39 ] Neither his near relatives nor his friends helped him ; he

[ L. 40 ] then fell at the feet of the "Five Faces".

[ L. 40-44 ] They raised 12,700 Varāhas and saved him and kept him [ under the protection ] of the seal of Hanumān for five days and a quarter and adopted him after putting ashes and a Rudrākṣa bead on his breast ; they provided for his livelihood and [ undertook to ] help him :

[ L. 44-46 ] For the maintenance of a fire pot on the hole where fire is put for melting gold, 1 Varāha per annum ; for the maintenance of the place where the metals are beaten and shaped,  $\frac{1}{2}$  Varāha [ a Māda ] per annum ; 1 Māda [ $\frac{1}{2}$  Varāha ] per annum for a maid-servant ; 1 Māda [ $\frac{1}{2}$  Varāha ] and cloth for his marriage, and for his thread marriage [ the Upanāyana rite ] one Pāvu [ $\frac{1}{4}$  Varāha ] and cloth must be given to him. None should beat him or find fault with him.

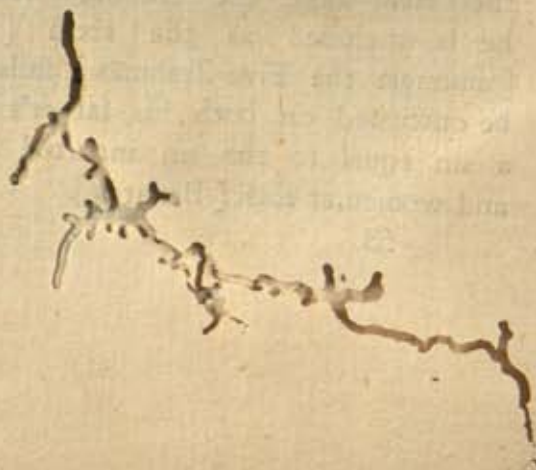
[ L. 46-53 ] Should any one dishonour [ this and harm ] him by bringing this matter to court, he should kill himself with the knife by which generally jackfruits are cut ; none should see his [ that man's ] blood : the house of the men who see his blood will not prosper.

This adopted son should not ask for another caste, he should not touch the water in the watering shed, and he should also not touch the rice kept for feeding Brahmins ; [ Even so ] by this [ deed ] he is included as the sixth [ amongst the "Five Faces" ]. Who [ amongst the Five-Brahmās ] fails to act [ according to this deed ] will be outcasted on both his father's and mother's side and will commit a sin equal to the sin incurred by killing cows, children, Brahmins, and women at Kāśi [ Benares ].



[ L. 53-54 ] This must be observed as long as the four oceans surround the earth in the four directions. Viśvabrahmā, [ the community of craftsmen ] is bound to observe this.

[ L. 54-56 ] The Gods Hari, Hara, etc., are witnesses to this and also the feet of Kālikā. This is signed by the Pañcabrahmās. May the Goddess Kālikā protect all.





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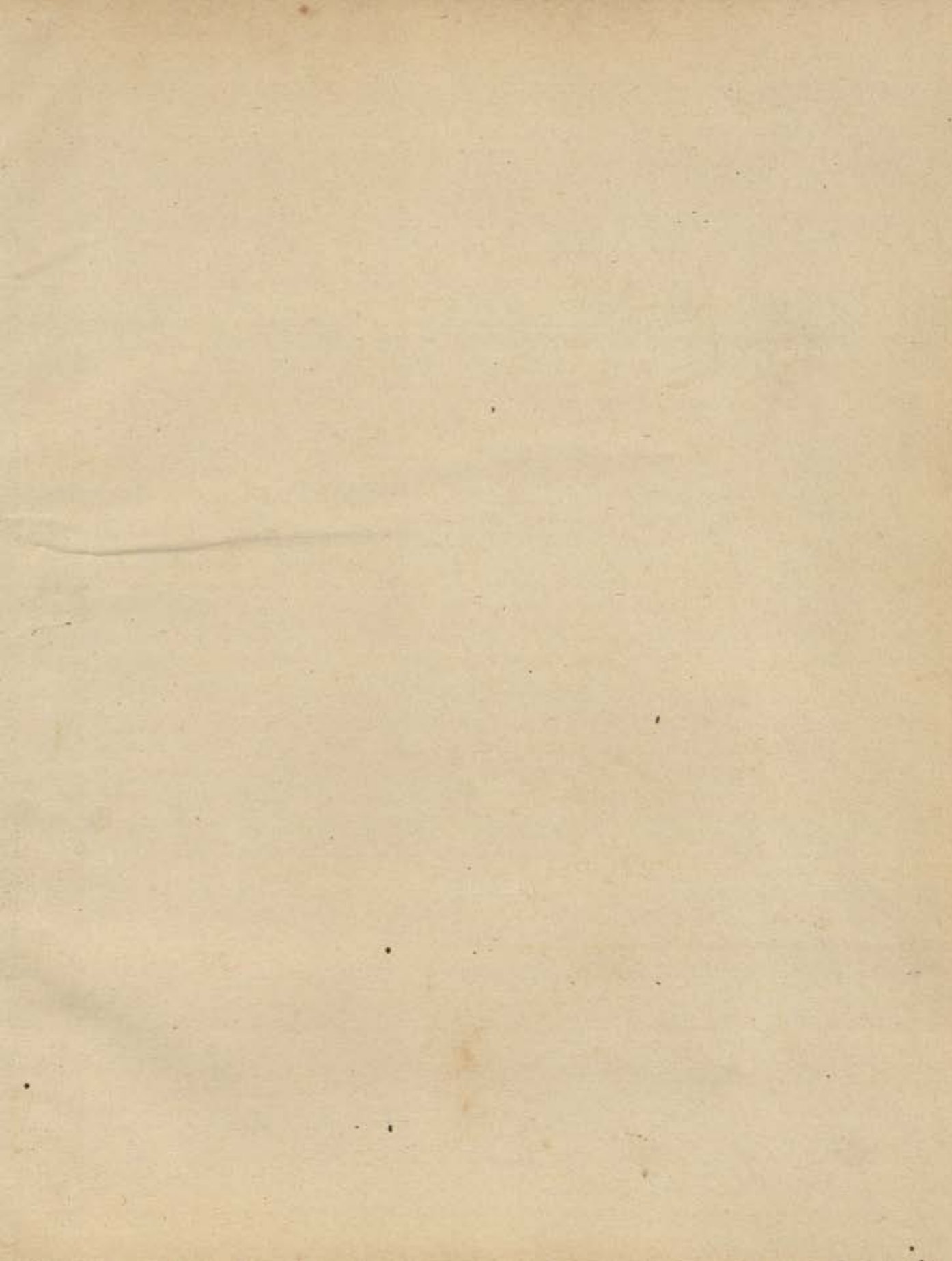
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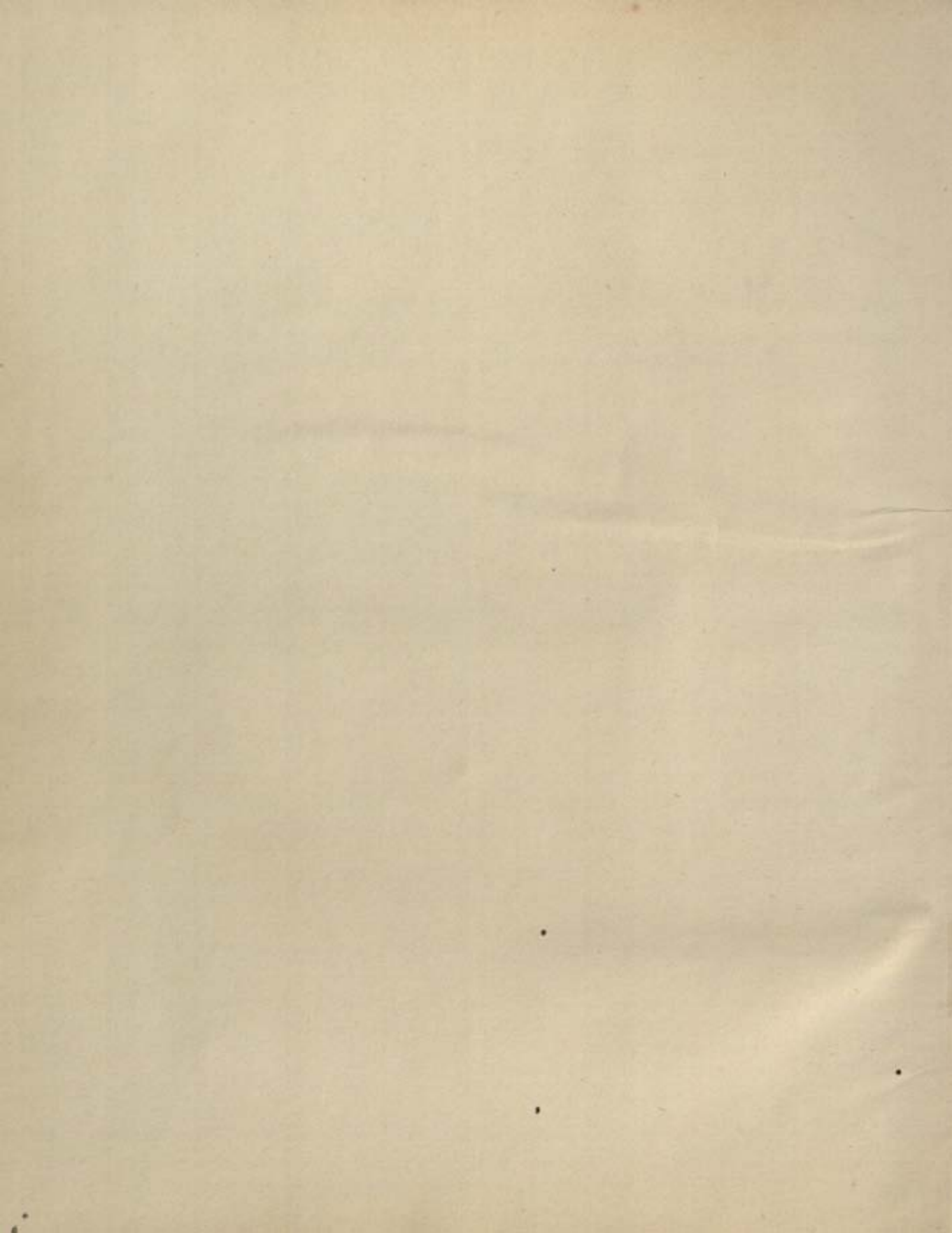


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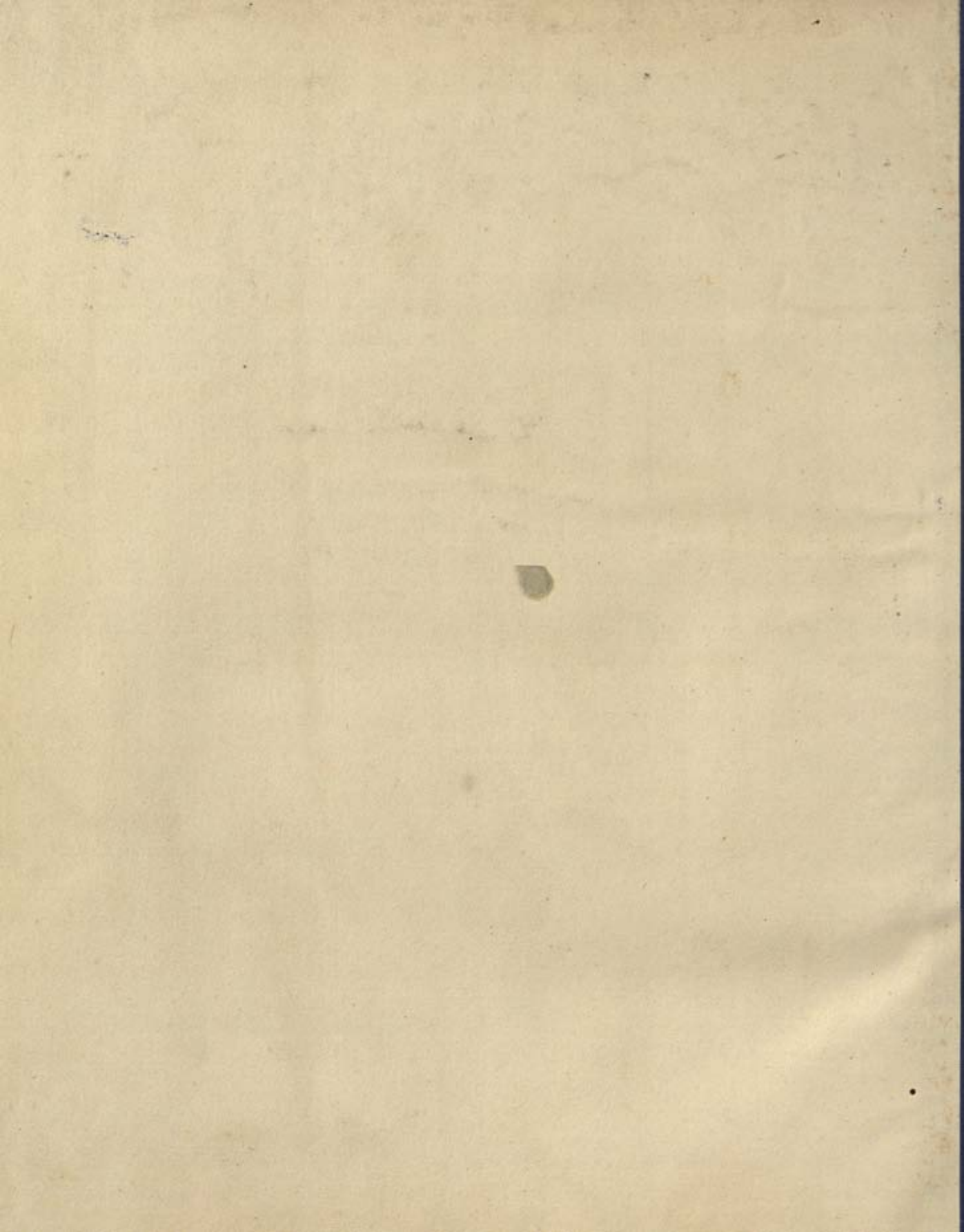














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